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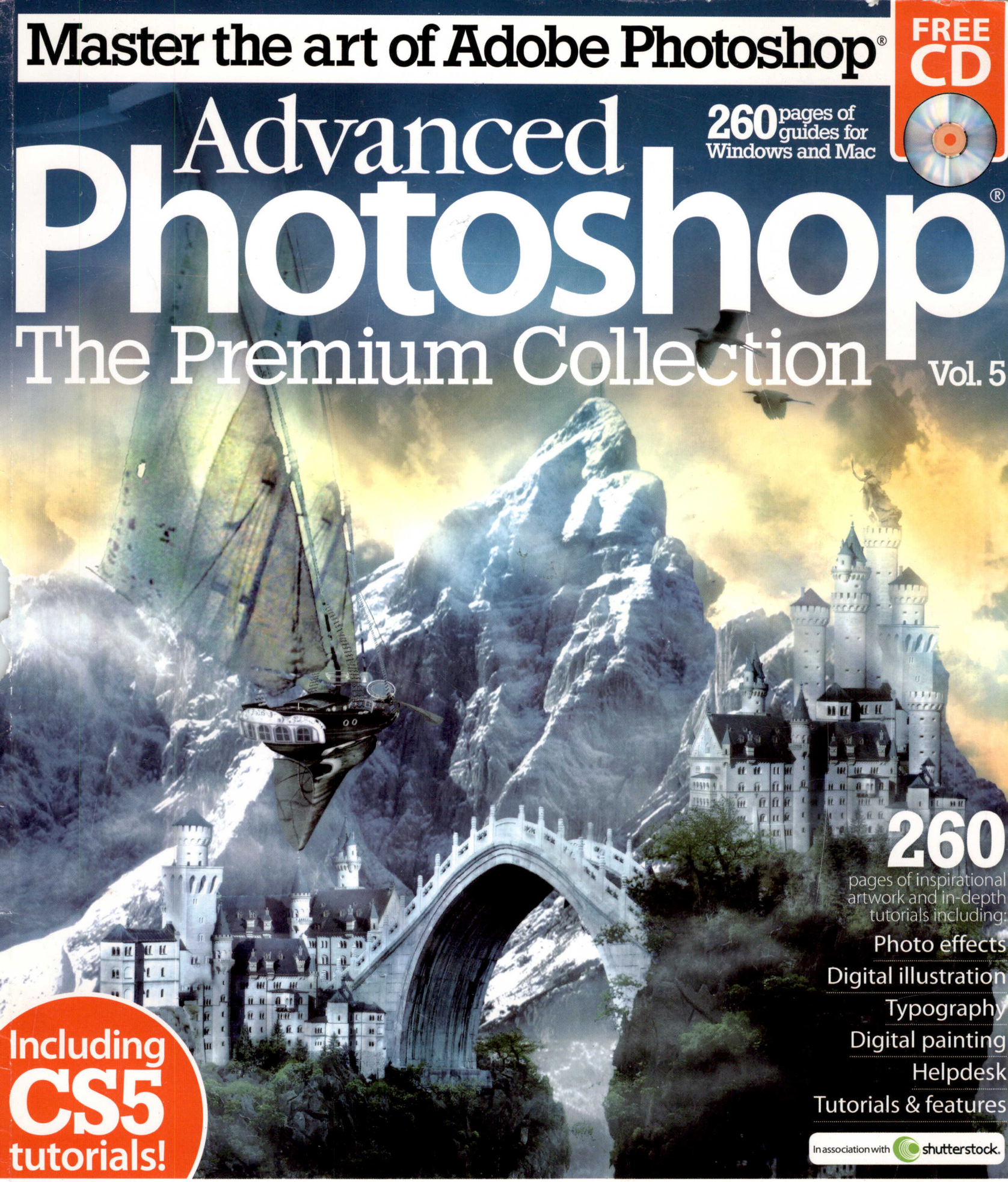

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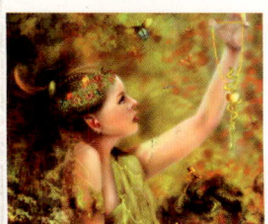

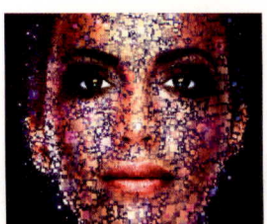

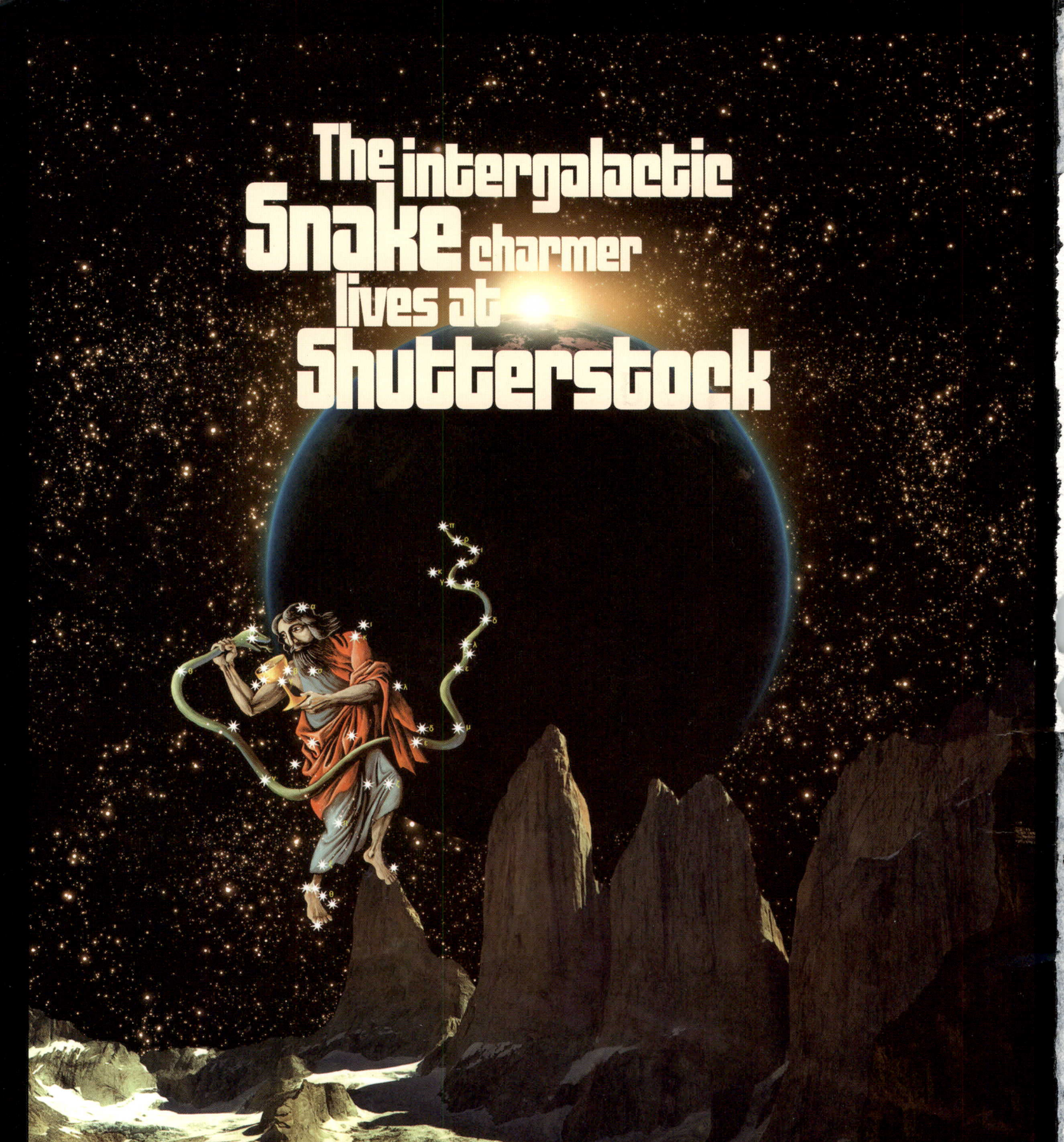

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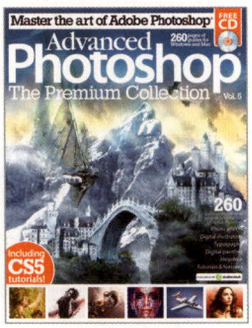

COVER ARTIST
Name: Colin Foss
URL: www.colinfoss.com
Visit Colin's site for more of his incredible Photoshop artwork

Advanced Photoshop® The Premium Collection Vol: 5

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33 Richmond Hill
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Printed by
William Gibbons, 26 Planetary Road, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 3XT

Distributed in the UK & Eire by
Imagine Publishing Ltd, www.imagineshop.co.uk. Tel 01202 586200

Distributed in Australia by
Gordon & Gotch, Equinox Centre, 18 Rodborough Road, Frenchs Forest, NSW 2086. Tel + 61 2 9972 8800

Distributed to the rest of the world by
Marketforce, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU. Tel 0203 148 8105

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Advanced Photoshop: The Premium Collection © 2010 Imagine Publishing Ltd

ISBN 978 1 906078 73 7

IMAGINE PUBLISHING

Welcome...

Advanced Photoshop: The Premium Collection Vol 5 is the latest in our annual collection of the very best from **Advanced Photoshop** magazine.

The bulk of this book is dedicated to showing you just what Photoshop can do, with step-by-step guides to creating stunning artwork. We have split these tutorials into five key sections, covering photo effects, digital illustration, typography, digital painting and Photoshop CS5, so there is sure to be something that takes your fancy.

As well as tutorials, we have a selection of in-depth features, looking at Photoshop and its uses in more detail, speaking to industry professionals about their experiences. We also have interviews with some of the very best digital artists in the world, showcasing their unique styles and artworks.

At the back of the magazine, you will also find a Helpdesk section, where we have put some of the most common queries that we have been asked, answered by those in the know. You'll also find further education on our free cover disc, which has a selection of video tutorials on Photoshop CS5. Enjoy!

Advanced Photoshop
The Premium Collection Vol: 5

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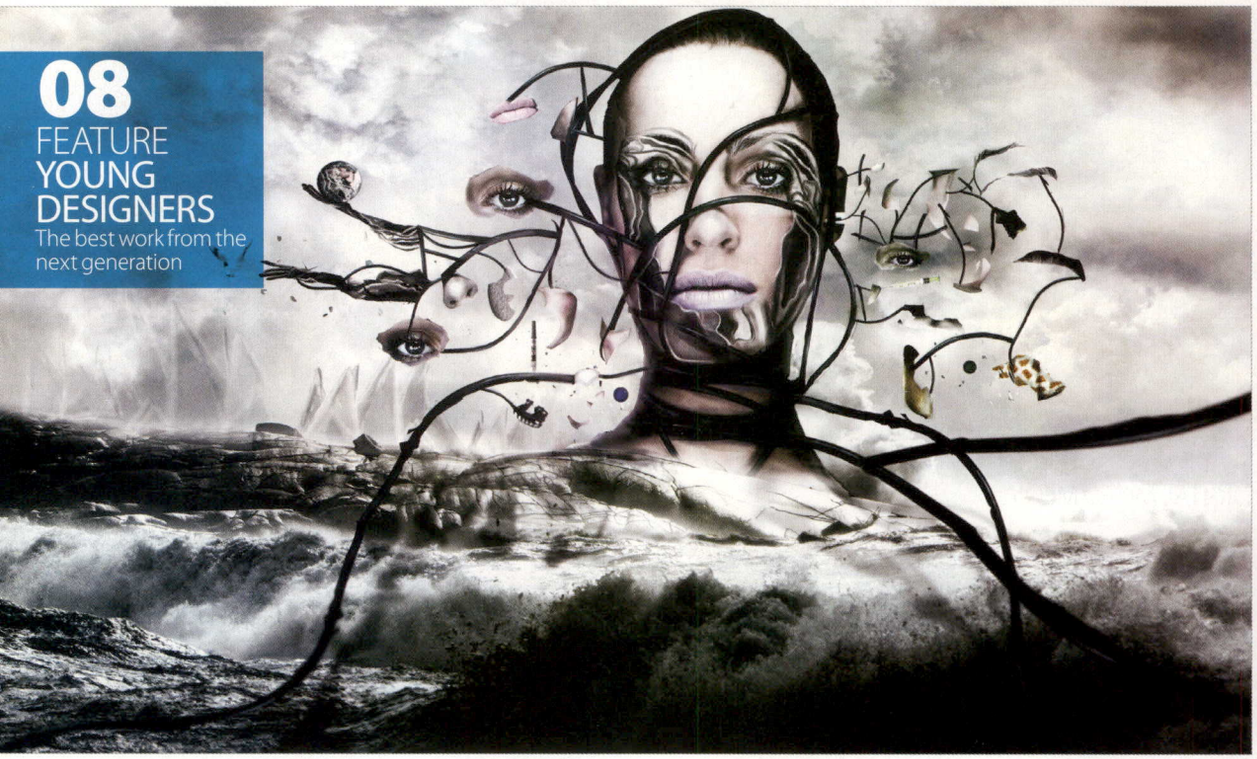

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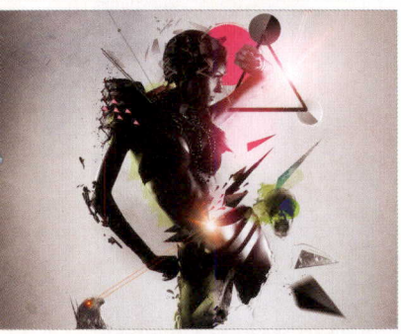

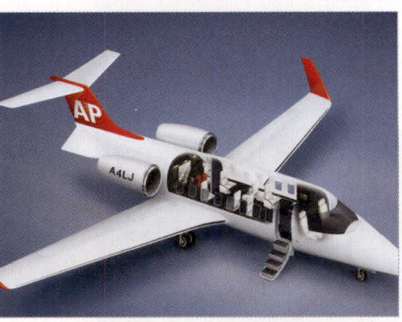

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Young Designers

Out with the old and in with the new – we explore the trendsetters and established young artists lighting up the design arena

It's no surprise that commercial artists are getting younger by the year. The modern-day designer is introduced to the latest digital technologies at an accelerated rate, and the accessibility of the internet, digital art communities, and the many cool and aesthetic styles around today, are encouraging young designers and artists to show off their work.

This feature takes a good look at those up to the age of 25 who are producing contemporary styles, and reveals how they've explored and delivered professional work at such an early age. Some you'll be familiar with, others will be new to you, yet all are highly capable and extremely talented.

We'll be exploring how Photoshop has shaped their styles, how the online community is playing a part in their promotion, and whether they think an art education is a necessity in this digital age.

Calm Like a Bomb (above): *"My first attempt at a breakdance piece. I didn't want to replicate the style completely. I tried to make it my own" © Joe Moore*

Fatima (left): *"A break between commissions. I wanted to give the sense that the birds had been painted with a traditional medium and this was running" © Joe Moore*

Joe Moore

Age: 21
Country: USA
Clients: Creativefan.com, BDB, Digital Chaos, Media Militia
URL: www.soad2k.deviantart.com

"I love using Photoshop to create distortion effects, specifically the Displace filter"

Q&A

Can you share with us the major influences of your style?

"2Mino is probably my biggest influence to date. I love the way he creates his compositions. His illustrations are so detailed and intricate it just blows me away."

How essential is Photoshop when creating your design?

"Photoshop is totally essential. I use 3ds, Apophysis, Illustrator and Poser in my work process, but without Photoshop I would not have the control over composition that I really require."

Can you give us some ways you apply Photoshop to create effects?

"I love using Photoshop to create distortion effects, specifically the Displace filter – scattered smudging and layer masking along with custom brushes and clone stamping selections. It's one of the best looking and interesting ways to create a dynamic effect."

How To Disappear Completely: *"This was a part of a series I created, trying to produce some monotone coloured works in a dark and gloomy atmosphere"* © Joe Moore

Rik Oostenbroek

Age: 20
Country: The Netherlands
Clients: Mazda, Panasonic, Volkswagen, Palm
URL: www.secretshowcase.com

"When you stop experimenting, you might feel dead"

Seasons: *"A piece about the change of weather and how that could influence our mood" Credit: stock by Katanaz*
© Rik Oostenbroek

Q&A

How essential is Photoshop when creating your designs?

"I do 90 per cent of my stuff in Photoshop. The other 10 per cent is down to digital and traditional painting. In Photoshop I get the feeling of control. I'm quite a control freak. Everything blends well together in Photoshop – 3D, vector and photos are easy to combine in the program."

What accolades has your work received from peers and clients?

"My designs have been featured in the most influential newspapers in the Netherlands. I won the Crestock Photoshop competition in 2008, which got me a MacBook Pro. My design is on one of the most sold drinks in the Netherlands as well. It's quite fun to walk in Amsterdam while seeing people drinking your design."

What is the most important lesson you have learnt in your early career?

"That you don't have to lose your own style. Whenever you're working for clients, just do your own thing in the free time you've got. When you stop experimenting, you might feel dead."

> "It's quite fun to walk in Amsterdam while seeing people drinking your design"

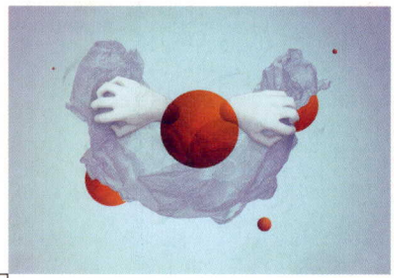
Max Spencer

Age: 19
Country: Britain
Clients: Mekanism, Hyatt Hotels, Charles Schwab, RYZ Wear, The KDU
URL: www.maxspencer.co.uk

Max Spencer's design influences are mainly Continental, as he explains: "I'm a big fan of minimalism, so naturally I have been influenced by Swiss as well as German design throughout my studies. A whole host of artists have influenced my illustration work – many of which are members of the depthCORE collective (**www.depthcore.com**)."

It is clear that his elegant digital style is complemented by thoughtful and contemplative Photoshop application. He reveals: "Photoshop is where my work comes together, compositing images, modifying objects, layering imagery and creating effects, among other things. The diversity of tools and use of these keeps me on my toes. Adobe has made it easy to shoot elements across from Illustrator too, which has been a great time-saver and something I use from time to time in my work."

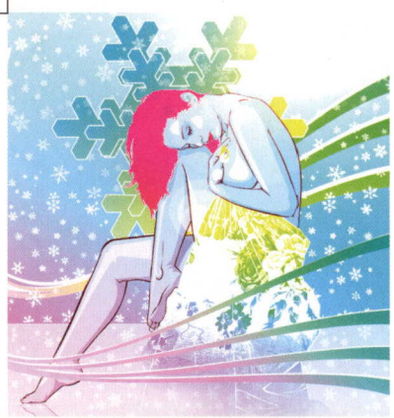
Effects certainly vary throughout his working process. Colour adjustments, shape tools and blending modes are noticeable additions. Spencer comments: "The Layer Styles function is a tool I would be lost without – and using filters such as Multiply to overlay textures, most of the time combined with an Opacity tint. I commonly use the Screen and Exclusion filters to help create a softer feel in some of my pieces."

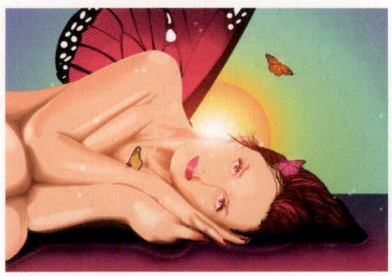


Goddess (above): *"Although one of my slightly older works, I have been experimenting with a pastel style lately. You will be seeing more of this over the next few months" © Max Spencer*

The Wait (top left): *"First part of a series of illustrations in collaboration with Justin Maller and Justin Lopez" © Max Spencer, Justin Maller and Justin Lopez*

Untitled Hands (left): *"The paper sculpture in the background was created using tissue paper, string and some standard desk lamps to cast shadows" © Max Spencer*

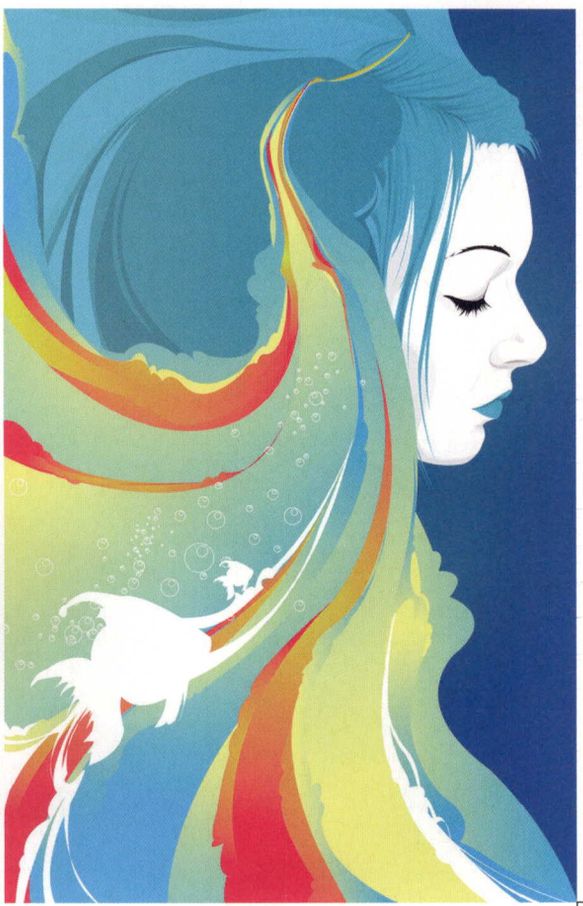




Me And My Frozen Heart (top): *"This piece is vexel. I did the line art with the Pen tool and coloured the skin bit by bit. Textures were applied last" © Pablo Jeffer Da Silva*

Good Morning Butterfly (above): *"I consider this one of my best techniques, made with blending modes. Finishing touches applied in Photoshop" © Pablo Jeffer Da Silva*

Amphritite (right): *"The effects on the corners are produced from gradient shapes in Illustrator. This image got a Daily Deviation on deviantART. I love this work" © Pablo Jeffer Da Silva*



Pablo Jeffer Da Silva

Age: 22
Country: Brazil
Clients: Digitalflow.org, Postera.com.br, Urbanarts.com.br
URL: www.rockfield.deviantart.com

Q&A

Can you give us some ways you apply Photoshop to create effects?

"Photoshop is an essential finishing tool. I draw with Adobe Illustrator but always use Photoshop to apply final touches. People ask how I get balance and harmony in my colours. I use a Gradient Map layer, with a Soft Light blending mode and low Opacity. This makes the colours more similar to one other, creating a sensation of being in the same environment."

Do you live by any design rules?

"I have one and only one rule, and this is that easy shortcuts and magic formulas do not exist. Everything you produce should be done with hard work and dedication to get the best result."

Where do you see yourself in three years?

"If I'm honest I'd love to be considered as one of the top 20 vector artists working out of Brazil."

Nicolas Baroille

Age: 17
Country: Germany
URL: www.nicogamer.deviantart.com

You Degravitate Me (top): *"Made for Cosmosys' Gravity exhibition. In this I wanted to take my current style to a new level and use a real person"* © Nicolas Baroille

Big Fish (middle): *"I had an underwater scene in my mind and then suddenly the idea of making it a fish appeared in my head"* © Nicolas Baroille

Wild (above): *"This one was created for slashTHREE. I created the base shapes and added scratches, eyes and related objects"* © Nicolas Baroille

Q&A

Can you give us some ways you apply Photoshop to create effects?

"When you have a nice coloured shape, duplicate it and apply a Lighten or Screen blending mode. Merge both layers. Now you should have a little glow behind the shape. I used this on my *A New Beginning* artwork."

Who do you think are the hottest artists right now?

"Tomas Brechler, Grzegorz Domaradzki, Anton Semenov and Chris Haines – and a big shout to my friend, Diego L. Rodriguez. I could write a long list of friends I've made in my career."

Do you use any digital hardware or plug-in software?

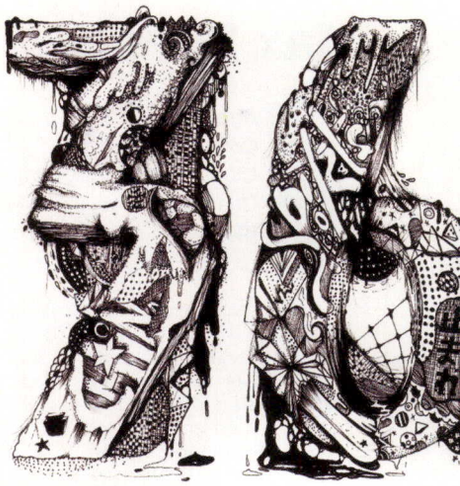
"I have a Pentagram Titan tablet, which I rarely use, and a scanner from Canon. The scanner is very important to me. Sometimes I draw something on paper that I really would like to digitalise."

Magomed Dovjenko

Age: 16
Country: Russia
Clients: Nike, Toyota, Reebok, The KDU
URL: http://iammago.com

361 (right): *"I spent about 13 hours on this new illustration for the Chinese Sports brand called 361°. Collaborating with the Keystone Design Union on it, we have been exploring new options to give the brand more style and to show them how far we can push the visuals"* © iammago.com

RYZ Shoe (far right): *"I was invited by the KDU, to collaborate with them on their RYZ X KDU Sneaker Collection. There were 20 artists working on custom sneakers, of which some were used as t-shirts. This has been so far the biggest single Footwear x Art collaboration to date"* © iammago.com/Ryz.com

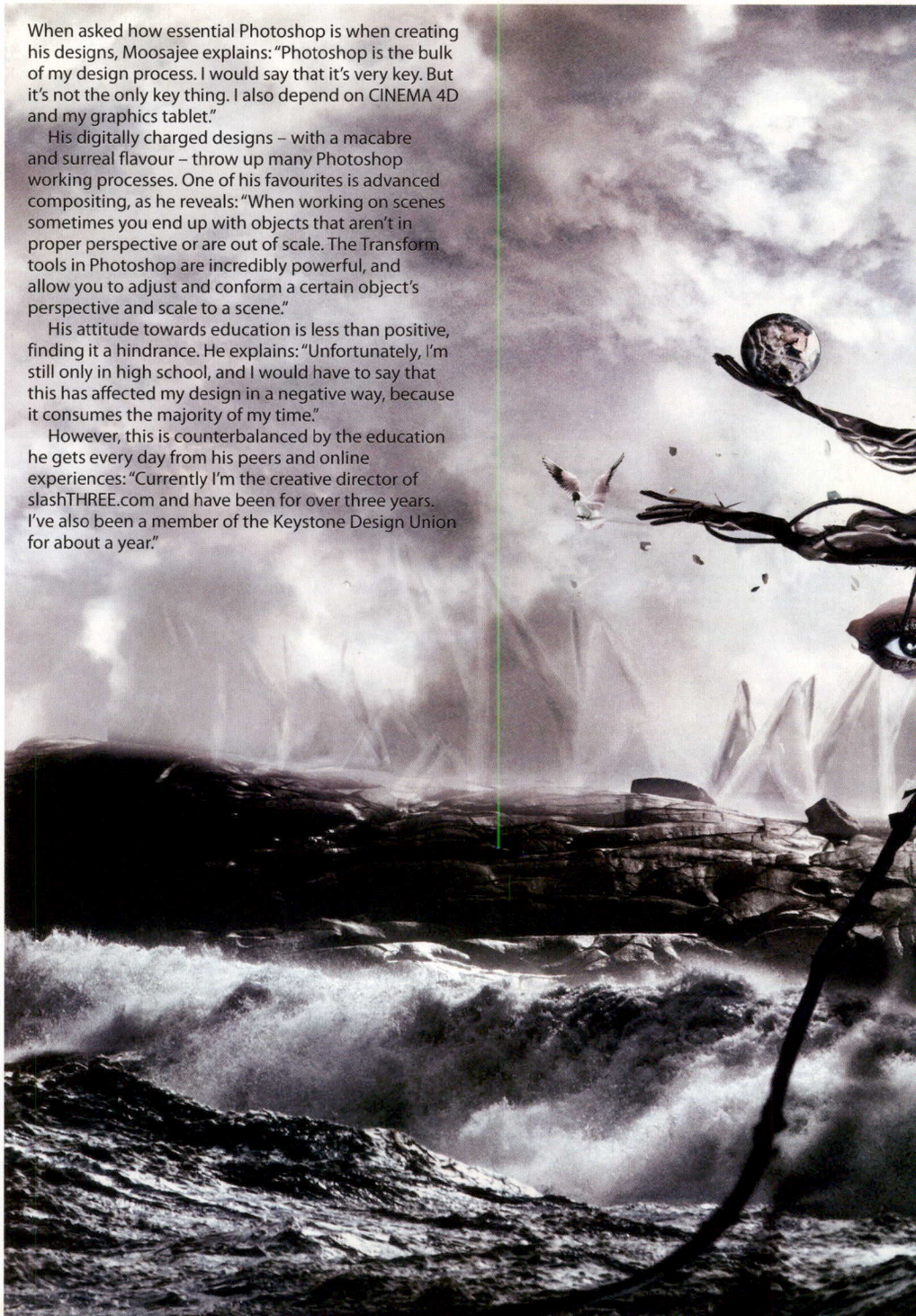


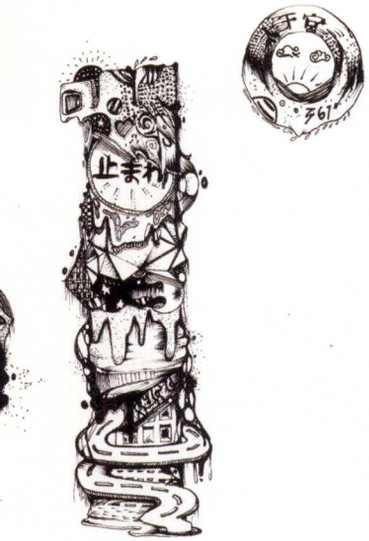
When asked how essential Photoshop is when creating his designs, Moosajee explains: "Photoshop is the bulk of my design process. I would say that it's very key. But it's not the only key thing. I also depend on CINEMA 4D and my graphics tablet."

His digitally charged designs – with a macabre and surreal flavour – throw up many Photoshop working processes. One of his favourites is advanced compositing, as he reveals: "When working on scenes sometimes you end up with objects that aren't in proper perspective or are out of scale. The Transform tools in Photoshop are incredibly powerful, and allow you to adjust and conform a certain object's perspective and scale to a scene."

His attitude towards education is less than positive, finding it a hindrance. He explains: "Unfortunately, I'm still only in high school, and I would have to say that this has affected my design in a negative way, because it consumes the majority of my time."

However, this is counterbalanced by the education he gets every day from his peers and online experiences: "Currently I'm the creative director of slashTHREE.com and have been for over three years. I've also been a member of the Keystone Design Union for about a year."





Q&A

Can you share with us the major influences of your style?

"My major influences are listening to rap music, being with friends and everything that is around me. There is no specific source – everything can inspire you".

Do you live by any design rules?

"The only rule I live by is that if you really want something and you're willing to do everything you can for it, then you'll get what you want in life."

How essential is using Photoshop in your design?

"Photoshop is often the tool I play with for hours, editing after finishing an illustration in Illustrator. I couldn't imagine working without Photoshop."

Saad Moosajee

Age: 16
Country: England/Pakistan
Clients: Thekdu, 361 Clothing, MTV Brazil, Tiger Beer/Tiger Translate
URL: www.saadart.com

"I'm the creative director of slashTHREE.com and have been for over three years"

"The Transform tools in Photoshop are incredibly powerful"

Machina: *"A futuristic image I produced upon joining the Keystone Design Union"*
© Saad Moosajee

David Fuhrer

Age: 23
Country: Switzerland
URL: www.microbot.ch

"In my mind nothing has to make too much sense. If there is a giant egg in a landscape, so be it"

2350: *"Produced using Photoshop, CINEMA 4D and a drawing tablet. Work made for a Crestock contest"* © David Fuhrer

Q&A

How essential is Photoshop when creating your designs?

"It's very important. It can handle very large document sizes. With Photoshop I'm able to produce really large images and I use the Brush tool a lot. For example, I apply cloud effects using a soft brush with Scattering activated."

How do you realise your compositions and themes?

"I go into some kind of trance and then I just do what my mind tells me to do. It's no big deal to come up with things. In my mind nothing has to make too much sense. If there is a giant egg in a landscape, so be it."

What accolades has your work received from peers and clients?

"I'm always happy about my modest fan base on the internet. I appreciate every letter I've received over the last few years. It always pushes me to do more and more work. There is also a bit of fear involved, since you want to do better and better – which can creatively block me a bit sometimes."

> With Photoshop I'm able to produce really large images and I use the Brush tool a lot

The Darkest Hour (top): *"The girl was amazing from first sight. I didn't like her clothes so I decided to challenge my painting skills more than I would normally do. The result was surprising" Credit:* ***http://faestock.deviantart.com, http://rammkitty-stock.deviantart.com, http://amarieveanne-stock.deviantart.com, http://bobbistock.deviantart.com*** *© Nathália Suellen*

Illusions (left): *"From MyColdWorld series, licensed to Rosemary Clement-Moore for the book cover* The Splendor Falls*" Credit:* ***http://rammkitty-stock.deviantart.com, http://umbradenoapte-stock.deviantart.com, http://hiddenyume-stock.deviantart.com, http://mirrorimagestock.deviantart.com*** *© Nathália Suellen*

Confessions (above): *"Collaboration with Luba Rudenko. In this piece I tried to create a circus-like essence. It's an old art effect, not too painted. Also featured in* Idea Photo *magazine, 2009" Credit: Luba Rudenko, MjRanum and own resources © Nathália Suellen*

Nathália Suellen

Age: 21
Country: Brazil
Clients: RandomHouse NYC, Penguin Group, Hilden Design
URL: www.nathaliasuellen.com

Q&A

Can you share with us the major influences of your style?

"I've been fascinated by strange and dark imagery since my childhood. I have created my own special world, always looking for beauty in the darkness, adding other surreal, emotional and conceptual styles. My influences range from Disney fairytales to Gothic movies, jewellery, Victorian era sources, old legends, and music from metal to opera, books and Biblical chapters."

Can you tell us about your idea generation?

"I try to mix dark with hopeful meaning, magic, macabre and dramatic elements. My ideas come when I look at my resources. I have a personal folder with the best ones, and when I want to create something I just take a look in there. Sometimes my themes come from listening to a song or watching a movie."

Michelle Monique

Age: 18
Country: USA
Client: Blackguard
URL: http://michellemonique.artworkfolio.com

Monique's style is firmly grounded in the realms of elegant fantasy. Lighting and composition are all-important, as she reveals: "To create glowing ethereal skin effects I apply an overexposed Curves layer and fill the layer mask with black. Then I use a soft white brush at a low Opacity and go over the highlights in the image to enhance them even more. I follow the same process to enhance the shadows with an underexposed Curves layer."

Still only in the infancy of her creative career, she finds her work already receives positive response: "My work has been widely recognised on the online community deviantART. I have received three Daily Deviation features, first place winner in a Zemotion contest and numerous article features. I have also been awarded Photographer of The Year by Valley Christian High School."

She has her reservations about her own progression, but shows a maturity ahead of her years, revealing a philosophical view: "I'm currently not studying photography or digital art – I'm in college for general education. The main downfall of not studying art is that I'm not pushed to explore other avenues of photography. I've only focused on one or two styles. However, because I'm so persistent in them, my ability has increased greatly in a short time."

Banshee (left): *"In this image I tried to capture the horror and elegance of the mythological creature, the banshee" © Michelle Monique*

Temptation (below): *"I wanted to capture a couple in a mysterious setting during a moment of passion" © Michelle Monique*

Calypso (bottom): *"This image is part of a Voodoo series that was inspired by Tia Dalma. I tried to recreate the set of her hut with hanging jars and mysterious substances" © Michelle Monique*

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Photoshop for photographers

We snap back to Photoshop's original raison d'être, discussing the software's ability to manipulate photo stock with our team of industry artists

Photoshop. It's a word that conjures many images and probably helped in creating them all. This visionary software has dramatically enhanced the design market, evolving its creative capabilities and amalgamating the competition's workflow, to create a super-hybrid artwork platform. From 3D and animation, to vectors and vexels, there's little it can't manage, especially in its latest CS5 incarnation. But before we get carried away, remember the name – Photoshop. Photo-shop. It is fundamentally, and always has been, the first stop for photo editing.

Photographers worldwide have been pushing the boundaries and functionality of our favourite app for over two decades and now they are reaping the rewards, being able to acclimatise a host of other option sets, producing even more stunning styles. From CG photography, through to photo editing and manipulation, never before have we been treated to so many hyperrealistic artworks from the industry's leading imageers – and in this feature we'll be showing you just how to capture these ultra real composites.

We've cut away the creative fat to present you with design facts. Four of the photography industry's leading lights will be revealing their production techniques and effect tips and tricks – showing how to piece together and influence these attractive commercial styles. >>>

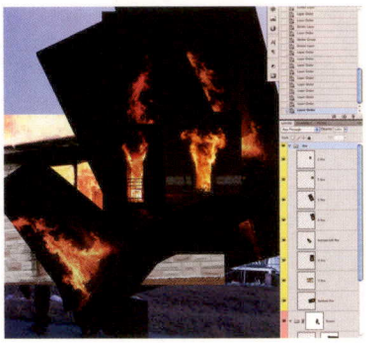
Pro tip...

Always back up your work in three different places with three different media: RAID drive, DVDs and online storage

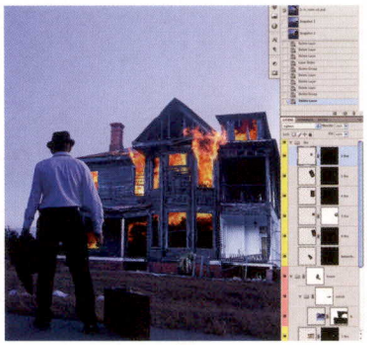
– Jim Lind, www.jimlind.com

Whirlcraft: "A personal project experimenting with lighting, compositing and surrealism. It makes me feel relaxed looking at it" © Clint Davis

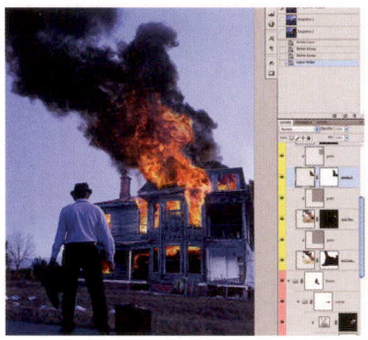
Feature



1: Gather stock images of large and small flames into your workspace. Make sure these have darkened backgrounds and experiment with placement



2: Blend the flame layers using Screen or Lighten modes to emphasise the fire values. This works best with darker images



3: Photograph smoke against a black background and invert to make it acrid. Add subtle fire glows with existing fire stock

4: Tweaks can be made with Color and Curves adjustment layers, exaggerating mood. This creates stronger exposure

In Ruins © Jim Lind

> A good photo composite doesn't just make itself. You can't throw just any photo stock together like some sort of creative omelette. Preparation and planning are essentials. Preproduction is everything. Many of our artists will actually fall back on traditional skills to realise their compositions, before touching any camera hardware or design software. This is referred to as previsualisation – pen to paper. Artists find this process to be the most efficient way of understanding an image – establishing perspective, subject matter, listing every detail needed to complete a scene. This includes time of day, locations, props, models, clothing, permits etc. This way, our artists eradicate most issues in the production and postproduction stages.

Piecing an image together is, in effect, much like constructing a narrative. Freelance photographer Jim Lind (**www.jimlind.com**) agrees: "A lot of modern digital styles start from a sense of storytelling. Photographers such as Diane Arbus, Nicholas Kahn and Richard Selesnick are a few that achieve this with fantastic imagery." These visionaries, along with precedent pioneers like Henry Robinson – best known for his combination printing – have helped crush the argument that altered digital photos are bastards within the arts arena. "Millions of stories are made through sets of pictures every day. Inexpensive cameras combined with online social networking have made hobbies out of curiosity and careers out of hobbies," adds commercial photographer Clint Davis (**www.clintdavis.net**).

But how does a hobbyist reach this creative Mecca? How are contemporary standards met, and by what means? Once you have a narrative in mind, how do you realise it? Our artists are aware that industry standard kit helps generate industry standard styles. A prime example is the use of strobe lighting in the preproduction phase. Photographers such as Dave Hill, Jim Fiscus and Clint Davis use these, as well as reflectors and speed lights, to control and shape image lighting. Hyperreal, multi-lit scenes are presently very popular. Davis agrees, commenting: "Properly placed strobes have the uncanny ability to transform the most mundane locations into something dynamic. I'd rather be equipped with strobes in a common parking lot than on top of a skyscraper without them.">>>

Pro tip...

File compatibility in today's higher-end cameras can be a stress reliever, allowing you to instantly view a histogram on the back of the camera or a tethered laptop
– James Quantz Jr, www.quantzphoto.com

Author Tsunami: "This figure represents a cyclist whose speed creates a catastrophic tsunami behind him. This is part of the campaign for global bicycle manufacturer, Author"
© Jaroslav Stehlík Agency: Kristian, Client: Author, Studio: LivDucci Playground

Pro tip...

If you pile compositions, always take pictures from the same position and angle. Don't move with the camera
– Jaroslav Stehlík, www.jaroslavstehlik.com

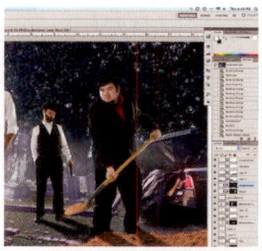
1: Car headlights are created first with a soft white brush at 100%, sized to the headlight and followed with a larger brush at a lower opacity to simulate glow

> Photo editing is another prime concern, as clients will certainly scrutinise work. Details are everything and it's those little details that can turn a regular image into an exceptional one. Davis explains: "I'll zoom in to 600 per cent in Photoshop and meticulously edit pixel by pixel. On most of my commercial photos, I immediately clip out the subject. It's always nice to edit them separately." Our photographers appreciate that composite management is best served in Photoshop. Freelancer Jaroslav Stehlík (**www.jaroslavstehlik.com**) concurs: "The easiest way to gain absolute control is to divide objects onto different layers and mask them all. These require precise colour management. Every correction made is through adjustment layers in order to instantly manage any further manipulation at a later stage." He uses an EIZO ColorEdge series monitor to reproduce colours as naturally as possible.

Depth of field (DOF) is another seemingly minor adjustment that creates maximum authenticity. Many digital enthusiasts will rely on Photoshop filters to replicate this. Z-Depth techniques produce comprehensive effects, however, are time consuming. Many professionals wont abide by this – our artists strongly advise you plan ahead. Jim Lind reveals: "DOF is something that is best mastered in camera. The previsualisation stage helps to better understand the important elements of the photograph in both the foreground and background. From there, it's much easier to choose whether I want shallow or maximum DOF, as well as what needs to be in focus. However, there is the Alien Skin plug-in Bokeh that, in combination with layer masks, can achieve very realistic results in postproduction". DOF PRO (**www.dofpro.com**) is also endorsed.

There will be times when preplanning may not suffice and you are going to have to tackle production headaches head on. Not even professionals are always supplied with high-resolution stock. Stehlík explains: "Sometimes materials come to me in low resolution and customers require printing results even five times higher than the stock's original dpi. In this case, filters are redundant. Reducing Noise or Surface Blur filters can help, before using already photographed data from earlier works to highlight textures. You can take other face photography at similar angles and transfer texture of pores, creases, etc. The best tool becomes the Healing Brush. It unbelievably accelerates your workflow during such projects. Sometimes for fast cleaning of dirty surfaces, I use Surface or Gaussian Blur. Applied on top of the original texture layer, I lift detail with a High Pass sharpening layer and blend with a Soft Light or Overlay blending mode.">>>

2: The models are photographed in studio, matching the predetermined lighting in the digital scene. Here you can see the lighting setup for the far left model



4: To achieve the colour cast in this image, apply a blue-filled layer set to Color blending mode, Opacity at 50%. Then apply a layer mask, removing colour cast from specific image areas

"The easiest way to gain absolute control is to divide objects on different layers and mask them all"

– Jaroslav Stehlík

Diavolo Band © James Quantz Jr

3: I apply a 50% Gray layer set to Soft Light and paint with a very low opacity soft white brush, to bring out contours and also to emphasise the highlights

5: To create motion within the scene, duplicate the shovel model layer and apply a Motion Blur. Apply a layer mask, invert the layer mask thumbnail and then just paint back in areas of motion

"Layer blending modes are also very important in the way I stylise my photos"
– Jim Lind

Flute © Jaroslav Stehlik

1: The snow stock was lifted from a night blizzard image taken with the camera's built-in flash and a long exposure. This created a natural blur effect. Stock is imported with a Screen blending mode

2: The clouds were composited from three different shots of rainy day skies. The pouring sky lights were produced by applying a simple white brush, painted onto an empty layer set to Overlay blending mode

3: The mountain range was stitched together from different location photos, with layer masks. These were blended using stock of water vapour, against black backdrops. Screen blending helped bring out the vapour

4: After airbrushing, shadows were created by copy/pasting models and transforming to amend perspective. Blurs were applied through a Gradient Fill added to a mask, before honing contrast and colour

> Compositions are constructed with great care and precision. Additional effects are considered likewise, but push the boundaries of probability to the limit. Enhanced sharpening, for example, primes a hyperreal style. "I feel in order to pull this off, you've got to walk a fine line between sharpening, and preventing too much noise and image artefacts," warns advertising photographer James Quantz Jr (**www.quantzphoto.com**). "Sometimes I'll use multiple layers to selectively sharpen certain areas of an image and mask out the softer areas. This can give you a sharp look without drawbacks such as halos. I most commonly use Smart Sharpen and, on occasion, High Pass techniques."

Photoshop CS5's 64-bit core compatibility also excites these photographers. Easing the burden of used memory when working with large file sizes, Stehlík tells us: "A major part of my work is photographed on a digital back and such data is needed to work up quickly, using all of the available PC memory." The endorsement of non-destructive adjustment layers, helping to refine the colour across a body of work, is clear-cut. "Layer blending modes are also very important in the way I stylise my photos," adds Lind. "Overlay, Soft Light, Screen, Color, Luminosity and Color Dodge modes are ones that I use most. Nik Software also offers an amazing plug-in called Color Efex Pro to achieve a wide range of styles." All these blending mode types allow photographers to obtain a specified degree of artificial exposure.

Photoshop's newly improved selection tools are huge timesavers, but beyond this, expand creative potential. Stehlík reveals, "I'm definitely impressed by Puppet Warp because the control of the original Warp tool isn't the best and the Liquify filter is not always precise. This definitely helps to streamline postproduction workflow." Content-Aware Fill is letting photographers composite in more-complex-than-ever image elements into more believable, yet astonishing, compositions, and so it seems what used to take hours takes minutes with Photoshop's Batch, Open and Stitch features. Photographers are speeding up workflows with these latest resources, producing a motivated creative turnover, and ultimately – as Davis rationalised – inspiring even more hobbyists to become the industry's next leading imageers in hyperrealistic styles. ■

The Getaway: "This personal project was shot and retouched to give an ultimate film noir essence" © James Quantz Jr

Pro tip...

Fast computers are getting cheaper. Editing seamlessly without lag is essential when experimenting, getting your ideas down fast – Clint Davis, www.clintdavis.net

Swamp Model: "This image was composited and devised for a fashion shoot for *Stir Magazine*" © James Quantz Jr Photography

RADIM MALINIC

With his distinct and recognisable style, we catch up with Radim Malinic, aka Brand Nu, to discuss his latest projects

Radim Malinic is a commercial freelance artist who has graced the pages of many digital art magazines, as well as on their covers on several occasions. For those readers unfamiliar with his works, Malinic is an artist with a firm belief in evolution rather than revolution, with an adaptive style highly recognisable for its energy and synergy through vibrant colour, shape and form, all creating his signature flair. "I've never had a single label for my style," he explains fervently. "My background is in graphic design, which puts an interesting spin on my digital illustrations. I admire classic illustrators and contemporaries for doing one style all day, every day. It's not like I suffer with attention deficit disorder, but I just love to approach every brief differently to the ones before to keep me excited about new commissions. My studio Brand Nu is all about being novel."

However, Malinic's latest creative ventures have simultaneously challenged and nurtured his approach to design. Contacted directly by Latitude Group in May 2009, he was asked to work on a project for international retail precinct QV Melbourne (**www.qv.com.au**), as he reveals: "Done by Vault49, the previous QV campaign in

THE PLAYGROUND PROJECT: *"This year I've been staying away from adding cut-up photo elements into my work in favour of my own shapes, with more careful thought to layouts"* © Brand Nu

> If you work with an ambitious art director, then they will always be interested in how you can better their idea

2007 was a piece of work that has stood out for me in its portfolio. I admired this project previously, thinking how I would work on something similar should it come my way."

What's new?

It was the diversity of Malinic's own portfolio that lured the client, allowing him to realise this goal. He was challenged with applying his playful style to a more sophisticated brand. "They were really excited to see how I would take their brief forward," he explains. "The key was to make the brand look and feel more mature, appealing to a broader spectrum of consumers. I was supplied with retouched photo stock and given the freedom to do whatever I wanted. 98 per cent of my input made the final cut, which is very rewarding. To top it off, the campaign has been received well in Australia, as well as throughout the design magazine community, with some fantastic feedback."

Many artists can only dream of such liberty in their commercial commissions, but always be careful of what you wish for. At times this can become a daunting task, with the absence of a clear idea becoming time-consuming and restrictive. Malinic, however, feels he thrives in such circumstances, always approaching projects with a proactive attitude and good communication skills. "To be supplied with a firm and agreed route of what is required helps to save time and keep everyone involved sane. There's nothing worse than having people on the receiving end giving you confused responses," he explains. "If I get approached with an open brief, people usually know I will deliver the most suitable visual route. When they come with prescriptive ideas, it's usually a result of long deliberation between all of the involved parties. On such projects, I usually develop a new skill or figure out something new, which is very refreshing. The QV project was blown open wide, and I could dictate what went into the final image. Alternatively, both Blossom Hill projects this year were very clear in requirements and art direction, although leaving options to be developed to my taste. If you work with an ambitious art director, then they'll always be interested in how you can better their idea and make it look amazing."

Malinic also believes that it's his ability to adapt and tailor to the needs of each brief, all tied up with his signature flair, that has accelerated his commercial opportunities and helped him tackle briefs. "When you look closely, you can pinpoint a number of ways that I've developed and now use in my primary work palette," he explains. "I believe in evolution, not revolution. Therefore I'm happy to push myself – maybe only a little each time, and without losing my signature and identity – by going radically into an unknown and faceless style. I get excited when working with a new element that slots in perfectly with my established ways, giving the overall illustration a fresh new angle."

BIRGER JARL AUTUMN WINTER CAMPAIGN: *"Every year I aim to stay away from clichés and obvious elements that suggest time and season. It spells winter but no snow in sight"*
© Brand Nu

QV MELBOURNE: *"Most of the illustrations have started much busier, with elements being weeded out to achieve a subtler feel and more mature look"* © Brand Nu/Latitude Group

QV MELBOURNE: *"This image was conceived first, establishing the overall creative direction for the rest of the campaign. The client really liked the perspective in the image and wanted to carry it through"* © Brand Nu/Latitude Group

Best foot forward

Not only has Malinic been challenged creatively in terms of subject this year, but also in terms of format. This is another evolutionary step in his design, which he has thoroughly enjoyed. "I always love the challenge of creating work that has multiple uses," he reveals. "This year was a prime example, using a piece of work on a website as well as five by seven-metre walls, iPhone screens and so forth. By being able to create versatile designs and change their applications effortlessly as needed, I believe that is another string to my bow."

Applying design to multiple formats and fleshing out a rich portfolio is supported by Malinic's extracurricular work. Pushing the boundaries of his tool base is extremely important when evolving his design effects, as he reveals: "It's no secret I switch between Photoshop and Illustrator to get the results I desire as quickly as possible. I also make it a daily challenge to figure out ways to make things easier and technically simpler to keep the creative process more intuitive." However, recently he has experienced a renaissance in his work, reverting and rediscovering older techniques that were once lost. "I'm exploring the beauty of Selective Color. I love using simple brushes and switching between blending brush options via shortcuts for weird tonal build-ups. The most integral part that has sped up my workflow must be pasting my random vectors from Illustrator as Shape Layers. The simple editing that follows is just pure genius. The Adobe packages just help me chisel the myriad of ideas I have for each image – work them, keep them or lose them – to find the most suitable approach."

Since most of his files are presently supplied to agencies, he explains how imperative it is to give them grouped and labelled samples, which are easy to edit and exchange. "The team at Latitude were chuffed with the PSDs given to them. To bridge the gap between pixel and vector, I build up my work from shapes, clipping masks and adjustment layers, ensuring the work is produced in a nondestructive way. Also, it makes it very easy to work in high resolution, required for large-scale prints. QV PSD files are one by one-metre, at 300dpi, CMYK, with the potential of being scaled up even bigger without losing a single pixel of quality. With each still around only 300MB in size, the FTP transfer took less time than it would for five large-scale PSDs to supply."

He also endorses his fundamental use of creative apparatus, and the opportunity this

> "I concentrate on the job at hand, and then make sure I promote the final results that I'm proud of"

QV MELBOURNE: *"Latitude Group, a creative agency behind the project, supplied me with the model images after they had been selected and retouched"* © Brand Nu/Latitude Group

SEVEN SKIES PERFUME RANGE: *"This project in 2008 was my first perfume packaging job and I enjoyed working closely with Phoebe Ellis, the creative director behind the brand"* © Brand Nu/ Seven Skies

provides him in producing his lavish style, as he elaborates: "If there is indeed a product that has become a must-have of any Photoshop artist, it is the Wacom tablet. This is simply an extension of my right hand, streaming my thoughts directly into the computer and onto the screen. Not long ago, I had to use a mouse and I felt pretty awkward for the time it took me to get to grips with it again. I had not used one in around five years, in which time I just found the Wacom tablet irreplaceable."

Malinic is an artist who shows diligence towards commercial and creative practice, and that has undoubtedly contributed to his strengthened and redefined position in the design industry, as he reveals: "I don't rush anywhere, I don't have any lists of dream clients, I concentrate on the job at hand and then make sure I promote the final results that I'm proud of. I'm not sure if I have been setting new trends, but I know I have inspired many new people this year and that's my aim. If I get one person to think about their work differently a day, a week or a month, I'm happy because this was how I got into the whole design and illustration game myself."

Things to come

This year Malinic seems like he has been travelling at 100 miles per hour, but he admits that the recent streamlining of work has been quite refreshing, as he says: "I could have slowed down in the last few weeks to concentrate on a single project – well, almost. I am rebranding one of London's museums on South Bank and it's been an amazing experience. The work so far has been a little different, as it caters to my broadest audience to date. The whole new campaign is rolling out in early December, and I will be making a launch announcement soon on my website. On top of that, I have started working on my next showcase publication to summarise the last 12 to 14 months of my work. The project has got a slightly different approach. I give people a chance to see their favourite project taken apart, explaining the way they were conceived. It will be amazing when it's finished. I've got many other surprises up my sleeve."

One of these is the launch of his latest book, which includes exclusive collaborations and mainly voted-for case studies, using some innovative print techniques and finishes to give the whole publication a touch of luxury. He's always been keen to share his skills in various digital arts magazines too, including *Advanced Photoshop* (**www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk**), as he eagerly admits: "I am always amazed how far away from the UK the magazine gets noticed, how many different hands it gets passed through when an enquiry or pleasant email comes from a distant place. Having been on the cover three times has brought me a heap of kudos and appreciation. Sometimes people dig out an old tutorial and get in touch directly for advice and tips, which is always nice to see." Malinic rounds things off, as he finally adds: "In my opinion, unlike other design magazines, *Advanced Photoshop* magazine has a wider scope towards a diverse audience worldwide, from Photoshop enthusiasts to project managers, design professionals and whoever else."

MR MOTIVATOR: *"The management team of Mr Motivator wanted a new contemporary image for the established fitness guru, with application from web to print and TV"* © Brand Nu/Mr M

www.brandnu.co.uk

ALIEN ZOO WEBSITE ILLUSTRATIONS:
"One of a dozen illustrations, where I enjoyed putting emphasis on the dancer's movements within the original photos and applying different colour schemes to each website page" © Brand Nu

GO: *"Speed and a futuristic design was the objective for this piece. Creating the mechanical muscles for the figure was the most rewarding part"*

CASINO: *"This was created for depthCORE, incorporating 3D for the cards, vectors and photomanipulation to create a stylish heist-themed image"*

Christopher Haines

Website: www.neondreams.com.au
Clients: METAphrenie Studios, CG World – China, Dreambox Design Studio, Funkrush

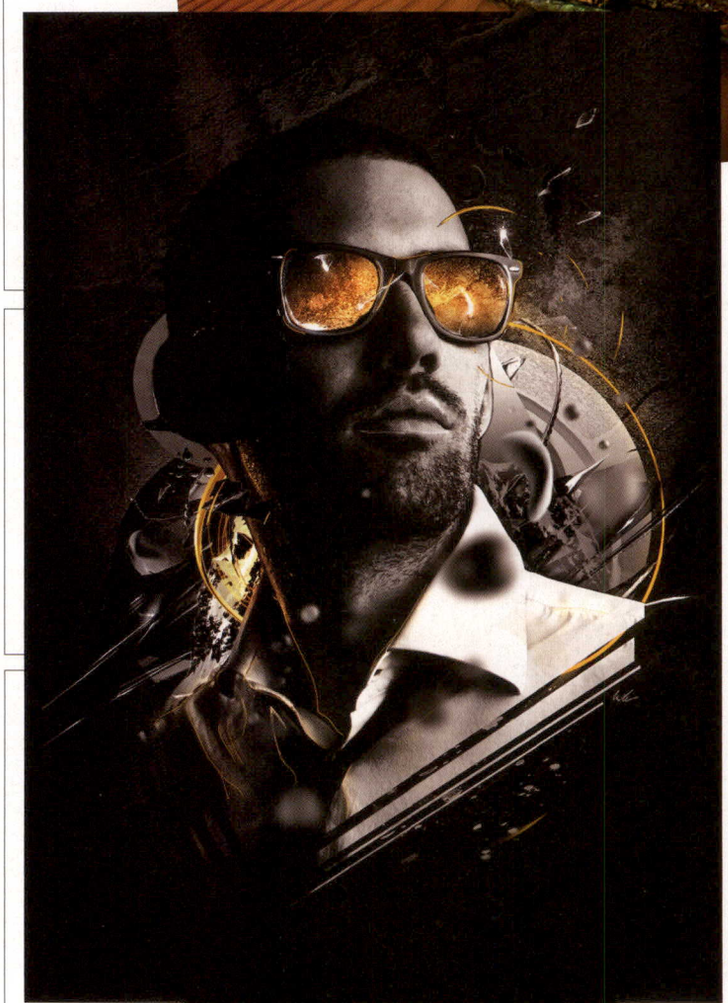
Christopher Haines is a 20-year-old designer/graphic artist from Perth, Western Australia. Multi-talented, Haines indulges in creating music and art, freelancing and also working at a local design studio. He started young, knowing early on exactly what he wanted to do in life, and after discovering Photoshop 5.0 in a photography class there was no looking back.

"The first time I received money for design was just a CD design for a friend, which included the big payday of $50 and some studio time to record music," says Haines. Now he is working on a new blog and a few things for depthCORE and Abduzeedo, and has picked up some notable commissions since that CD design.

When asked to describe his style, Haines says: "My style is surreal but involving at the same time. I often try to convey an epic and iconic atmosphere, and draw the viewer's eye in with the composition. While not intentional at first, I think I have developed a fairly spiritual theme to some of my works, too." He uses 3D renders, photos and extensive hand painting and colour matching to achieve the unique look, as he says: "The best way to describe my technique is matte painting meets photomanipulation meets 3D art. Photoshop brings everything together; I spend most of my time using it and could not live without it."

ATARGATIS: *"Atargatis depicts an angry sea goddess terrorising fishing boats. It was created using Poser, CINEMA 4D and Photoshop. For this image, I wanted a dynamic perspective and a sense of realism"*

ONCE WE THOUGHT ONLY OF THE WORLD: *"This piece is made of a number of stock photos which are combined by digital painting"*



KEEP ME IN THE DARK: *"This image was created for an experimental online project known as RVLVR. I worked with blending modes and manipulating CINEMA 4D elements within Photoshop to achieve these results"*

Rob Shields

Website: www.robshields.net
Exposure: Advanced Photoshop, Beautiful Decay

Rob Shields is a freelance illustrator, with his work often used in the fashion and music industries, as well as some lifestyle projects. While most of his artwork is photomanipulation, he mixes in elements of digital painting and 3D rendering.

It has been a relatively recent switch to taking design more seriously: "I started to design seriously about five years ago. I graduated from college with a science degree and no desire whatsoever to pursue that field. At that point I knew creativity was important to me. What I didn't know was how far design would take me – if anywhere. I had to trust myself a lot in the beginning, which was quite difficult."

The risk paid off, and after a few years spent building a good portfolio and sending out promotional packages and emails to everyone he hoped to work with, Shields began to get replies and commissions. He's certainly keeping busy: "I have a few tutorials I am working on right now that will possibly be out by the time this interview is published. What I'm most excited about is continuing to establish my secondary design identity, which is a major collaborative effort to be revealed in the near future."

Photoshop is where the majority of Shields' artwork comes together, as he describes his technique: "Photoshop and my graphics tablet are responsible for about 95 per cent of my imagery. I try to combine elements of photomanipulation with the slightly more organic effects of digital painting."

ODD BLOOD: *"This image was created using a graphics tablet for the colours, stock model and some of my own photography for texture"*

Insight

Thomas Tibitanzl (aka deZane)

Website: www.dezane.com
Exposure: Photoshop Creative, Blanket Magazine, Iniciativa Colectiva, Designflavr, Graphic Design Blog and more

deZane, real name Thomas Tibitanzl, is a 24-year-old digital artist, graphic designer and web designer from Germany, although he is originally from Prague. His work has appeared in numerous publications and on many websites, meaning that deZane is an up-and-coming name in the industry.

Drawing has been in his veins from a young age, having started out with pencil work as a child, moving into designing websites after getting a computer in his early teens. Website design steered his early artwork, as Flash became more popular: "At the time, only the really good web designers could create such cool interactive websites. They really influenced me and the whole internet. I decided to learn Flash 5 and make my own interactive website."

Once his first website was up and running, deZane turned back to his old hobby of creating art, translating this to the modern age by building a portfolio of graphics and digital artwork, as he explains how each piece comes about: "First of all, I always set up a theme for an artwork and let it float in my head until I see a clear vision with a suitable concept. After that I go stock hunting, finding the perfect stock images and create a coarse composition that matches my imagination. Generally, I need two weeks to create an artwork that I am satisfied with. Every artwork contains its own story, many of them a message, too."

deZane's work is growing in popularity and many of the pieces are available to buy from his online store on the website.

GHOSTS IN THE SHELL: *"Connected ghosts are jutting out from a hole in the wall. Imagine if you were to break a hole in the wall and see that the internet traffic is alive"*

REGENERATION: *"What you really seek is harmony, but some of us have forgotten this pleasure"*

OVERLOAD: *"Need to know the latest news on the internet, need to reply to emails as fast as possible, need to turn on the chat client and be connected with friends, need to check new activities on communities, need to look up for new threads on forums, need to update the blog, need to get more RSS feeds… Take it easy, too much may damage your ease of mind. Being online most of the time is not always a good thing"*

ADVANCED COMPOSITING

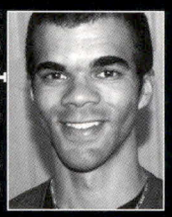
Create a high-fashion illustration with these essential skills

In this tutorial, we will be learning how to take interesting paint splatters and transform them into a skin-like texture, so at the end we will have had successfully mixed photomanipulation and digital painting together to create a high-end fashion-based illustration.

But before starting on anything, the most important thing we will need is a pen tablet to create some of the effects you see in the final image. Photoshop is a great tool to use because you have so much freedom when using the program; your creativity is not limited when it comes to Photoshop. If you want to add more splatter textures, you can go to **www.cgtextures.com** to find more.

The inspiration for this tutorial comes from one of Zach Bush's pieces, *A Soul's Silhouette*, where he mixes fashion photography with a very heavy grunge effect. Since this tutorial will deal a lot with digital painting, having a good understanding on how to paint or even draw will help you.

Our expert



Zach Bush
www.zachbush.com

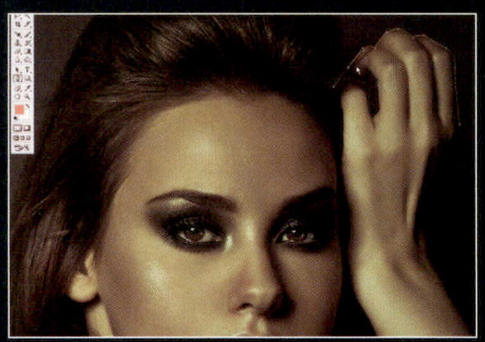
Zach is a freelance illustrator based outside of Washington DC. As of 2006, he has diligently worked to perfect his skills by consistently taking on new projects by various clients.

Source files

On the CD you will find the main model image used. However, this is a small image, so if you want the larger version then you will need to purchase it from **www.istockphoto.com**, image number '9762065'. There is also a document of links to all the other stock used in the tutorial, which are free to download.

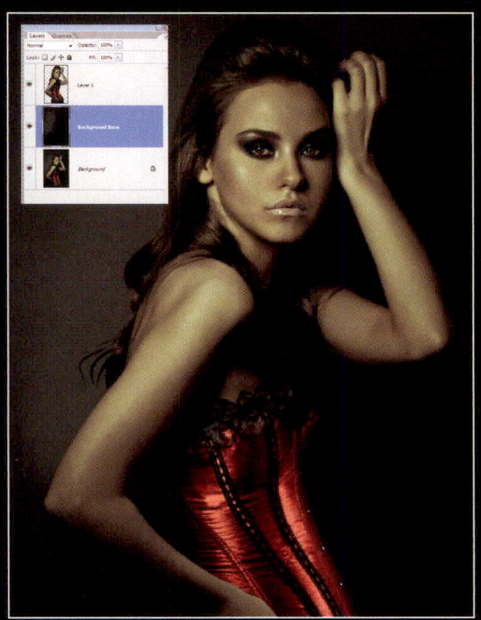
1 Cutout

The first thing you will need to do is to cut out the model using the Pen tool. Simply trace around her entire body (don't worry about her thin strands of hair since those won't be visible anyway in the final). Make a copy of the selection on a new layer. Use the Pen and delete the background in between her arms.



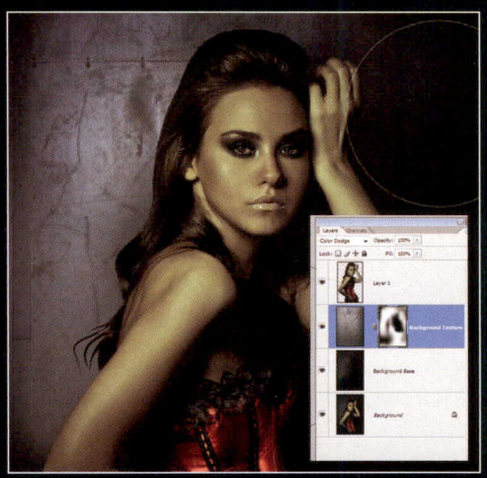
2 Create the background

Create a new layer and place it underneath the layer you just created. Now select the brightest part of the original background colour and fill the new layer with it. Select a soft Airbrush and make sure, in the Brush Presets, that the Opacity, Jitter and Flow Jitter are set to Pen Pressure. Paint in dark spots to make it look like the original image.



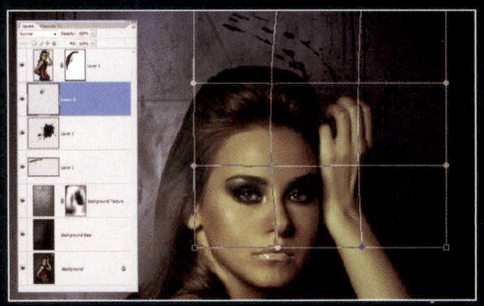
3 Background texture

Open up the 'MetalBare0117_L' texture from CGTextures and paste it into your canvas underneath the girl. Flip it horizontally and enlarge it until it fills the canvas on all sides. Set the blending mode of the texture to Color Dodge. Now give it a layer mask and erase parts of it so it has more of a worn-down feel.



4 Add wall splatter

Open up the 'SplatterWedge0020_L' texture from CGTextures. In the Channels menu, Cmd/Ctrl-click the inverted channel at the bottom and paste the selection into the main canvas. Open Hue/Saturation and drag Lightness to -100. Use the Transform command (Cmd/Ctrl+T). Now Ctrl/right-click and click Warp to adjust the splatter to your liking.



> "The first thing you need to do is cut out the model with the Pen tool. Simply trace around her body"

Tablet vs mouse

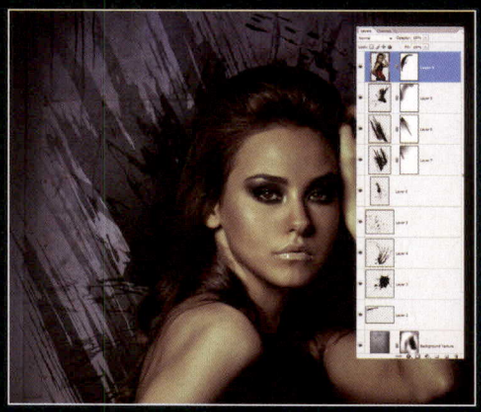
If you really want to take your designs to the next level you must invest in a tablet, as it gives you the option of pressure sensitivity whereas a mouse doesn't. This can radically change the look and feel, as well as the flow, of designing pieces of art for anyone who's trying to take their work to the next level.

Images and painting

When working with photomanipulation, it is very easy to try and have the photographs do all the work when designing, but don't rely solely on images to do all the work for you when you're trying to blend objects together. Using the tablet to help blend the real skin and the image splatter together is very important. It also goes with the black splatters as well.

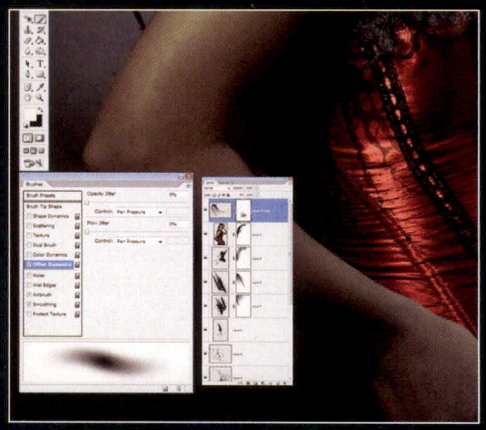
5 More wall splatter

Repeat Step 4 using the following images, all from CGTextures: 'SplatterLeaking0007_L', 'SplatterWedge0020_L', 'SplatterCircle0017_L', 'SplatterRound0050_L' and 'BrushStrokes0003_M'. Also use '1108939' from **sxc.hu**. Create layer masks for the last two images as well as for the model layer, and fade the ends of the splatters using the Gradient tool or Soft Brush. Duplicate 'BrushStrokes0003_M', flip it horizontally, compress it, then place it below the original.



6 Clothing splatter

Duplicate the 'SplatterWedge0020_L' that is on the background and bring it to the top of everything. Now scale it down, warp it, and then create a layer mask so you can fade the splatter using a soft brush so it looks like a stain on the clothing.

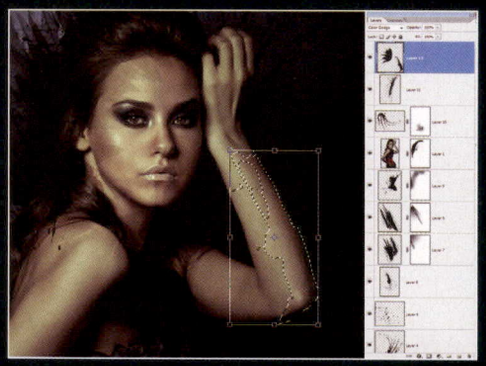


7 Black hair splatter

Open up the 'SplatterCircle0006_L' texture from CGTextures and follow step 4's Channel technique to cut it out and place it in the tutorial canvas. Turn it black using Hue/Saturation and make sure the thin splatter marks are over the top of the model's hair and background, then use the Eraser tool with a soft brush and erase the black splatter so it doesn't cover her face. Keep all the textures minimised and open.

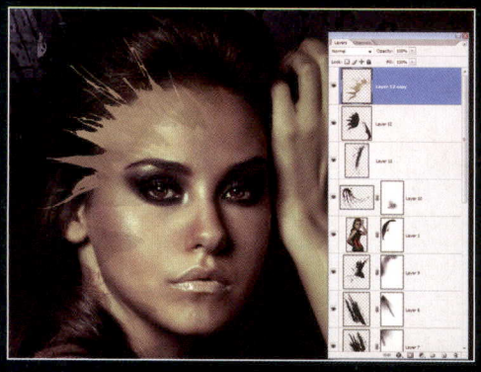
8 Face splatter

Open up 'SplatterRound0052_L' and use Step 4 again to cut it out and place it into the canvas. Instead of setting it to completely black, turn the red colour into a muddy dark brown and place it over her face however you would like, and set the blending mode to Color Dodge. Move around the parts of the splatter that you can't see and place it over her skin.



9 More face splatter

Duplicate the face splatter you just created, change the blending mode to Normal and lighten it up to match the colour of her skin. Make sure the sharp splatter points are coming off the left side of her forehead and erase everything except those points.



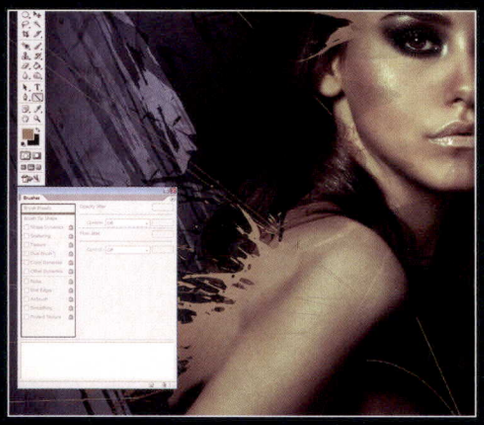
10 More skin splatter

Open the 'SplatterCircle0006' texture from CGTextures and cut it out like in Step 4, then place it in the canvas. Adjust the size and place it over the model's shoulder. Cmd/Ctrl-click the thumbnail and select the colour of the skin, then paint in the selection so the red is replaced by the colour of the skin. Create a layer mask and Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert it and paint in the area so only the splatter is coming out of the back.

> "Make sure the thin splatter marks are over the top of the model's hair and background, then use the Eraser tool with a soft brush and erase the black splatter so it doesn't cover her face. Keep all the textures minimised and open"

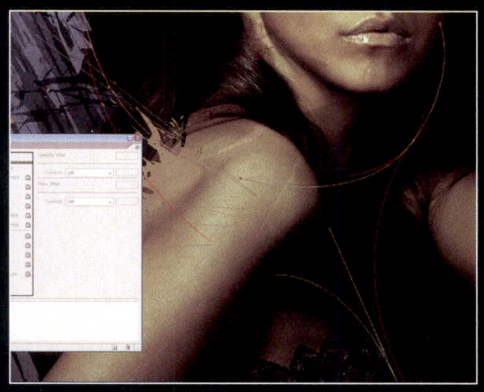
11 Skin strings

Create a new layer and select the Line tool. Make sure Fill Pixels is selected on the top menu and that the Weight is set to 2px. Select the skin colour for the Foreground Color, then make several different lines coming from her shoulder, arms and neck.



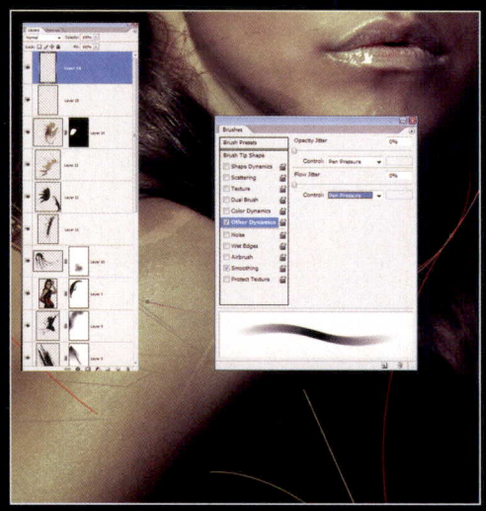
12 Red strings

Create another new layer and select the Pen tool, and have the Paths button selected on the top Menu bar. Create curved paths coming from the face and shoulder. After creating the first curve, Ctrl/right-click and select Stroke Path to fill the path with the line, then delete the path. Repeat for each curve.



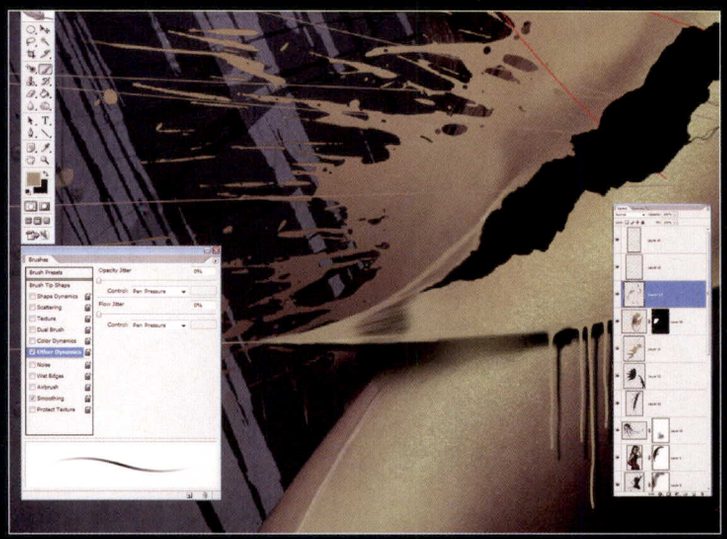
13 Setting up to paint

Create a new layer and place it below your two String Layers. Now select the Chalk 60 Pixels brush and, in the Brush Presets, check Other Dynamics. Put the Opacity and Flow Jitters to Pen Pressure from the drop-down menus.



14 Painting skin

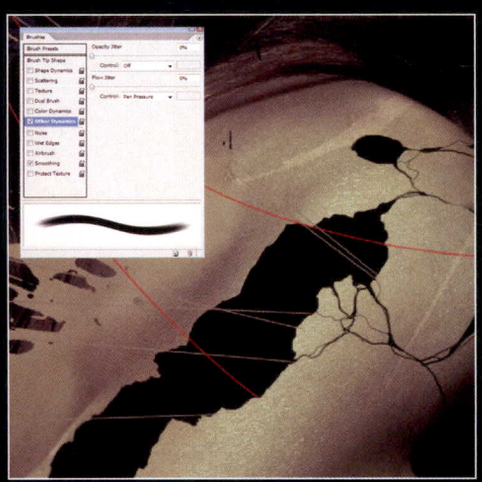
For this particular part of the tutorial you are going to have to use your artistic eye along with your tablet to paint in an effect to make it look as though the model's skin is being peeled apart by the 2px strings you created before. While you're painting, hold down the Opt/Alt button to make your brush turn into the Eyedropper, which will allow you to select different shades of the skin while you are painting.



> Use your artistic eye along with your tablet to paint in an effect to make it look as though the model's skin is being peeled apart by the 2px strings you created. Hold down the Opt/Alt button to make your brush turn into the Eyedropper

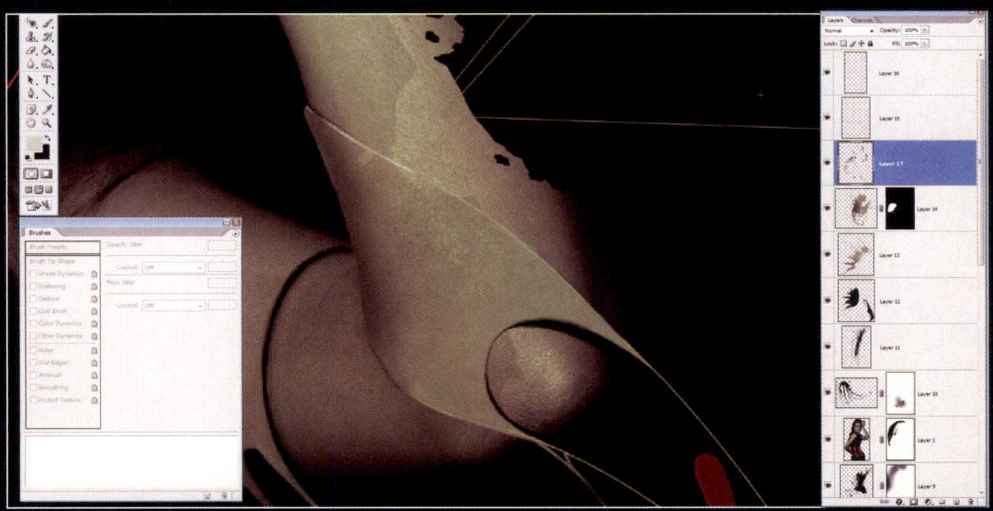
15 Painting holes in skin

Inside Brush Presets turn the Opacity Jitter off. You want the holes in the skin to be hard edges to give the feel that the skin is dry and breaking apart. You also want to paint small cracks around some of the edges to help sell the feel of the skin cracking.



16 Skin highlights

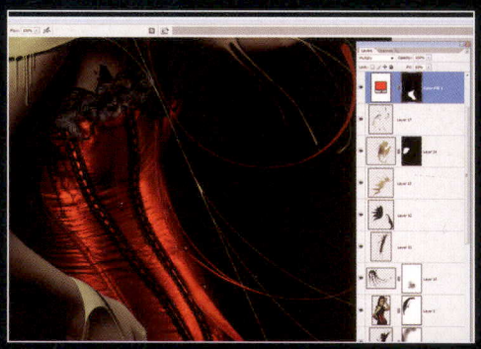
To be able to have the skin you are painting stand out you need to paint in highlights around part of the outer edge of the peeling skin. Don't paint too many highlights or it will end up looking too outlined.



Tutorial

17 Brighter clothing

At the bottom of the Layers palette, click on the 'Create a new fill or adjustment layer' icon and select Solid Color. Pick a bright red colour. Invert the layer mask and paint in over the top of the model's clothing where it is red. Set to Multiply.



> We want to change the colour of the model's eyes so that they match with the red accents in the rest of the image. Select a Solid Color adjustment layer and pick the same bright red colour for the Fill as you did previously

When painting...

Always remember to turn off any adjustment layers when going back through and painting on a layer below them, because if you don't and you try to sample the colour on your paint layer, the colour you select won't be the same because it will be affected by the adjustment layer.

21 Eye colour

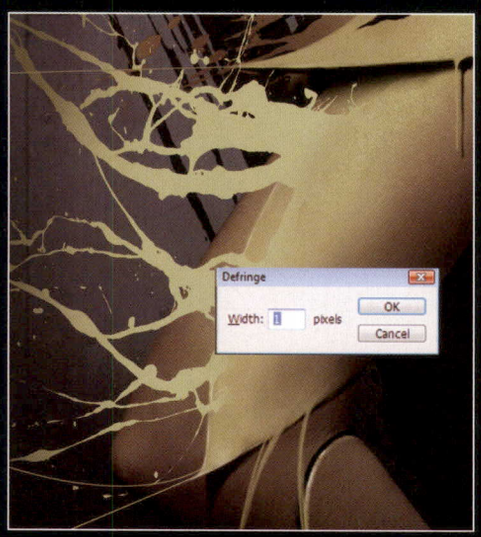
We want to change the colour of the model's eyes so that they match with the red accents in the rest of the image. Just like in Step 17, select a Solid Color adjustment layer and pick the same bright red colour for the Fill as you did previously. Next, invert the layer mask and paint in over the model's iris with a soft brush, making sure that you set the blending mode to Linear Light. See our screenshot, right, to see how this should look.

18 More splatter

Open up 'SplatterThickPaint0060_L', cut it out and place it in the canvas. Use Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T) to compress it some and place it over the arm on the left. Hold down Cmd/Ctrl while clicking the thumbnail, then paint over the red using a skin colour and darken the edge using the Burn tool. Create a layer mask and erase the right edge so it blends into the skin.

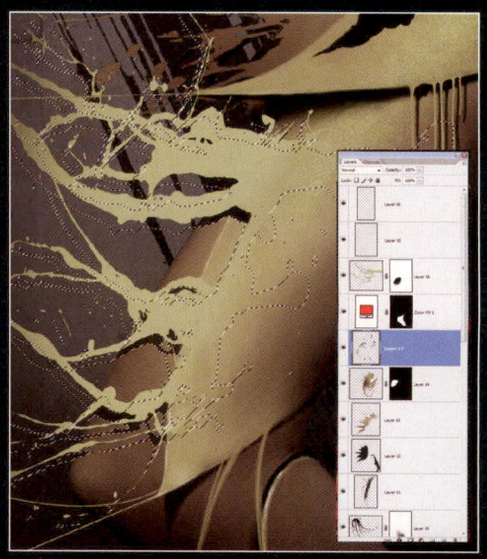
19 Defringe splatter

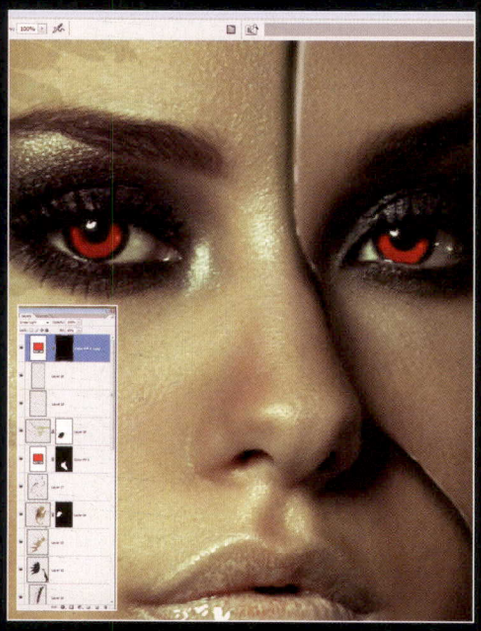
There may be a little red left around the edges of the splatter, so to make sure there won't be any left go to Layer>Matting>Defringe in the top Menu bar and make sure the Width is 1 pixel. Now click OK. This will remove 1 pixel width around the edges of the splatter.



20 Splatter shadow

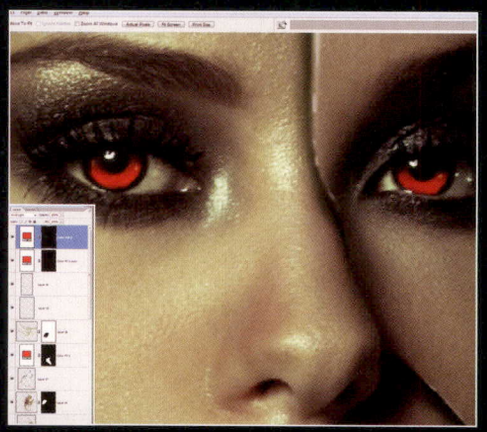
Hold down Cmd/Ctrl while clicking the thumbnail again and move just the selection slightly lower than the actual splatter. Now go back to your paint layer and use your brush to paint in a dark shadow. Just make sure you keep it on the arm.





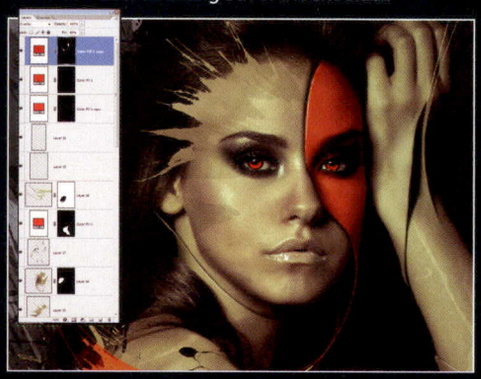
22 More eye colour

You want to make the colour of the iris pop just a little bit more. Duplicate the Fill you just created and set the blending mode to Vivid Light, then slightly darken the red. You will need to erase some of the visibility as it gets closer to the top eyelid.



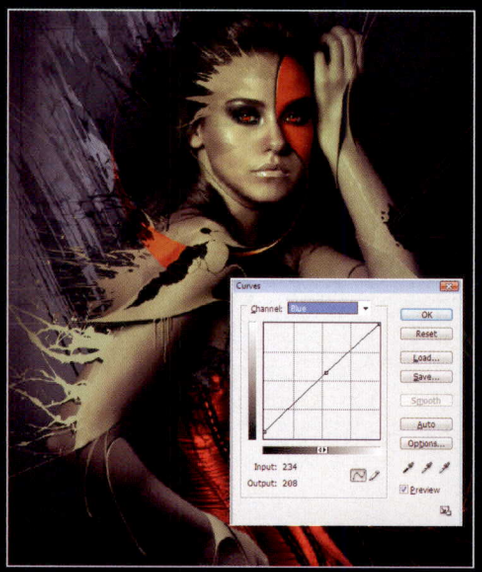
23 Mask colouring

Create yet another Solid Color adjustment layer, again from the bottom of the Layers palette, and set the colour to a red that is darker than the ones for the eyes. Invert the layer mask and then paint over the mask you have created. Also paint inbetween the thin red lines that are coming out of the shoulder.



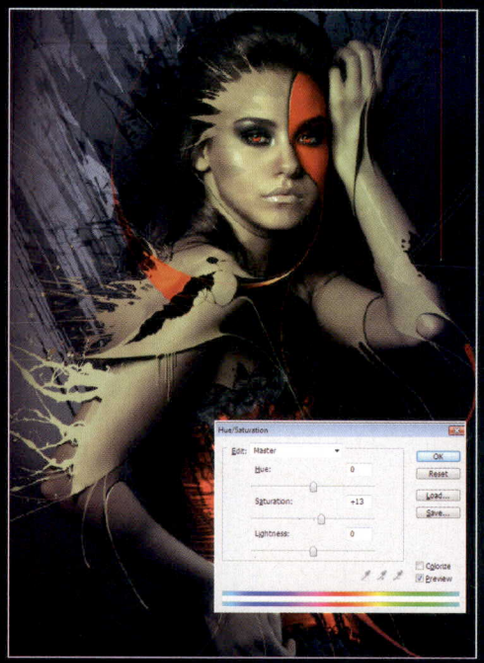
24 Blue tint

Go back to the Adjustment Layer options and select Curves. In the Channel menu click on Blue and raise the dot in the lower left-hand corner up just a little bit. Now create a dot in the middle and raise it only a tad. Using a large soft Eraser, in the layer mask, erase the middle around her face and upper arms.



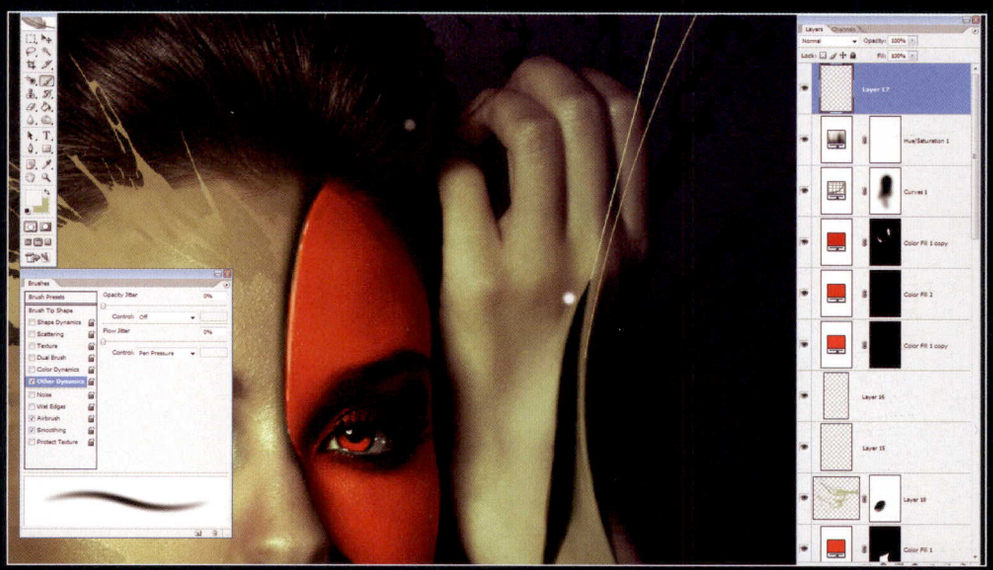
25 Increasing colour

Now we need to add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Increase the Saturation by +13. This will make the image pop just a little bit more.



26 Floating particles

Create another layer and, with a small soft Brush, place several all over the canvas so it looks like small floating particles are all around the girl. Using the Pen Pressure with the Eraser, fade some of them so it looks like they are not all on the same depth of field.

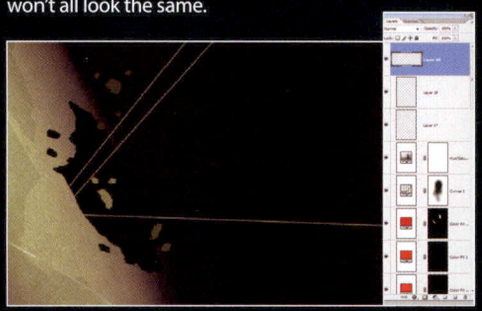


27 Clean up

Before you put the final touches on, you need to go back through and clean up anything that needs to be deleted or improved upon. This is a good habit to get into so you won't miss anything that shouldn't be there.

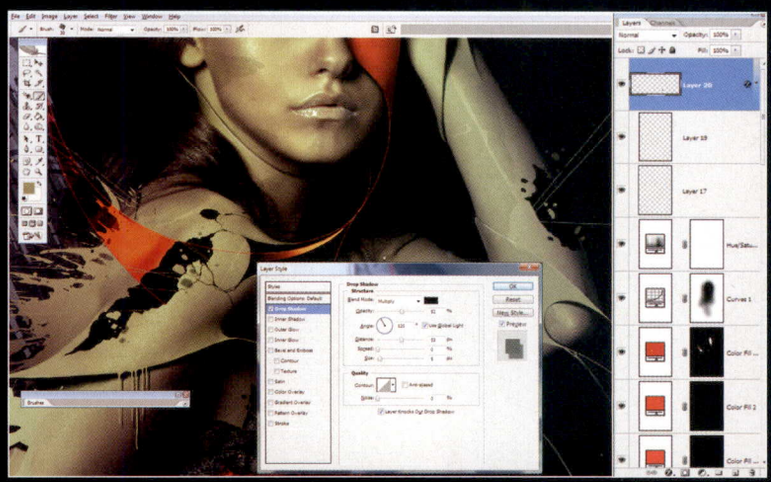
28 Skin fragments

Create another layer and use the Chalk 60 Pixels brush to paint in skin fragments that are close to the holes in the model's arms, so it looks like they are breaking off. Paint different sizes for each one so they won't all look the same.



29 Drop Shadow

Finally you can double-click the thumbnail that has the fragments in it, which will open up the Layer Style dialog. Check Drop Shadow and set the Opacity to 52%, Blend Mode to Multiply, Distance to 53px, Size to 5px and Angle to 120. You should now have completed your high-fashion illustration.



Tutorial

ELECTRIC EFFECTS

Invent illuminated images with simple yet effective toolsets and techniques

Retro styles are littering the current graphics industry; from movies and album sleeves to advertising, typefaces and fashion, this renaissance is firmly influencing artistic approaches. Creatives are always wanting more, so who are we to deny you? This electrifying image is inspired by Walt Disney's 1982 stunning cinematic experience *Tron*. We have brought to life our own take on its iconic electro settings and styles in this in-depth tutorial.

We'll show you how to produce these retro effects and recapture the essence of this fantastical sci-fi film with nothing more than a few simple Photoshop functions, some lavish techniques and a single stock image. The Brush tool and layer blending modes are fully explored, and we will show you how to amplify these with Photoshop's Layer Style options. Advanced editing and compositing techniques are applied through the Pen tool, Clone Stamp tool and layer masks, and we'll explore the powerful potential of options sometimes overlooked, such as Flare filters and Gradient tools.

This jam-packed tutorial will not only help you realise great retro and lighting effects that you can use time and time again in personal or professional projects, but will also present extreme entertainment as you re-create an Eighties classic. So sit back and enjoy all the creative power you've been blessed with!

Our expert

Adam Smith
www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk/user/Adam

Eighties nut Adam Smith immersed himself in electro resources to achieve this homage to *Tron* A daily dose of Daft Punk also helped the creative process along.

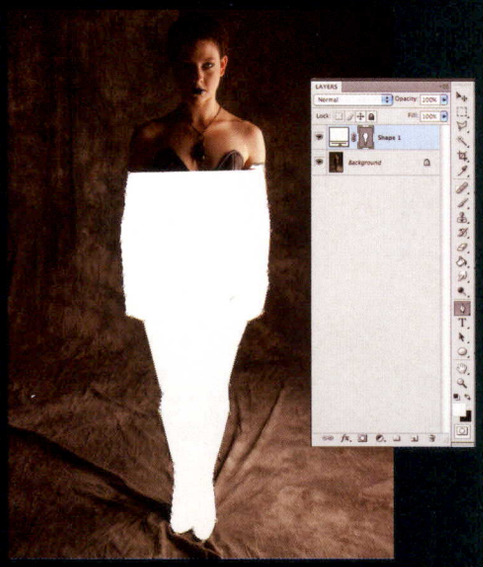
Source files

On this issue's CD you'll discover a host of resources. Ripley Pierce (**http://deathrockstock.deviantart.com/**) provides the main model. There's also a Web 2.0 badges PDF, which gives you the basics for creating gloss effects, as well as flares and gradients.

> "Recapture the essence of this fantastical sci-fi film with nothing more than a few simple Photoshop functions, some lavish techniques and a single stock image"

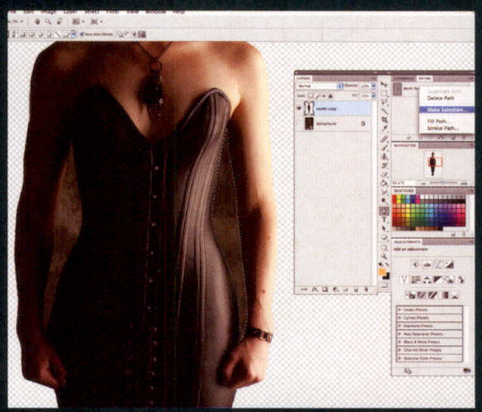
1 Work with model stock

Open 'Leather_20_by_Deathrockstock.jpg', selecting the Pen tool set to Shape Layers. With a white colour set, draw around your model. Ctrl/right-click the shape layer, selecting Rasterize Layer. Cmd/Ctrl-click this shape layer's thumbnail, activate the model layer and press Cmd/Ctrl+J, duplicating a new clean cutout layer. Delete the Shape layer. Apply the Pen Path tool in-between the crooks of your model copy layer's arms.



2 Work paths

Activate the Paths palette. Ctrl/right-click your Work Path and choose Make Selection (set to New Selection). Press Cmd/Ctrl+X to erase visual values. Hide the Background layer. You should now have a clean cutout of your model. We now need to create a leather suit for our model



3 Transform tools

Start by making a selection using the Rectangular Marquee tool across the midriff of the model's costume. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate this fabric section, placing it above the model's exposed shoulders. Use the Edit>Transform>Warp tool to position and align your costume. Cmd/Ctrl-click the model cutouts thumbnail, press Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I to inverse your selection and erase outside fabric edges by hitting Cmd/Ctrl+X.

Working with fonts

When we decided to use this fantastically retro image on our cover, we knew that we had to make it work by tying in clever font usage to give the whole thing an authentic feel.

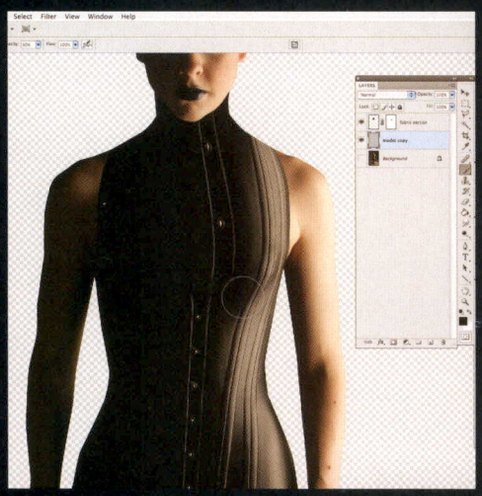
If you want to replicate this and turn the tutorial artwork into a poster, for example, then the font that we used is from www.dafont.com. This is a great site for finding some amazing free fonts for use in your artwork. Search for 'Tron' and you will see the one that we selected, which is completely free.

When you are looking for fonts, check the usage restrictions first. Some are free, but others are for noncommercial use only. With dafont.com, there is also a text file inside the download that explains how you can use the font.

Tutorial

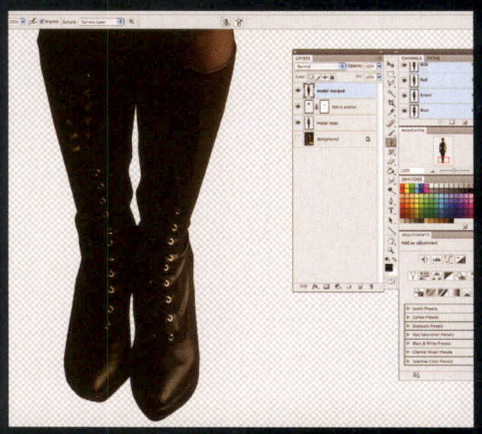
4 Costume textures

Apply a layer mask to this fabric layer and, using a soft-edged 30% Opacity black brush, blend your costume layers. You may need to edit with the Warp tool as you go for best effects. Once you have the basics aligned, merge your model and fabric layers only, then select the Clone Stamp tool.



5 Clone costume elements

Set this at 80% Opacity and zoom into your image. Holding Opt/Alt, select the surrounding clear parts of fabric then apply the Clone Stamp tool to the costume's and boots' buckles, covering them all until you have a completely clear costume. Continue this Clone Stamp treatment by Cmd/Ctrl-clicking the merged model thumbnail and apply to the exposed areas of leg. Also clone away the wristwatch.



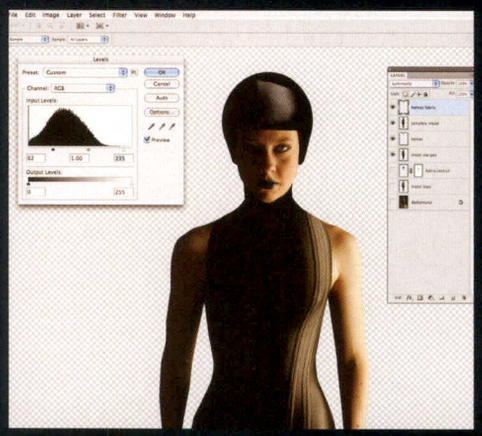
6 Pen Shape tool

Use the Pen Path tool to draw a clean selection, mimicking separation between the model's legs. Select your model layer and erase using the Path palette, as in Step 2. Switching back to the black Pen Shape tool, draw and rasterise a helmet for your model (see the example). With only your helmet and model merged layer visible, press Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E, merging into a complete new model layer.

> "If you're looking to bring out strong, almost fluorescent effects, then apply Color Dodge blending brushes, preferably with white"

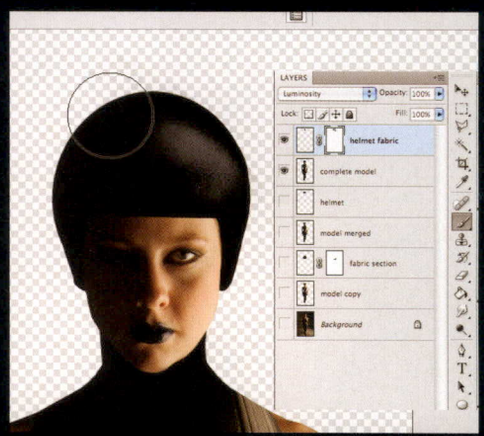
7 Realise and sharpen

The helmet does look flat, so make a Marquee tool selection over the thigh fabric area, pressing Cmd/Ctrl+J, creating a new layer. Place this over the helmet and use Transform tools to resize and shape. Apply Filter> Sharpen>Sharpen More twice, set a Luminosity blending mode and then select Image>Adjustments>Levels. Set Input values at 62, 1.00 and 235.



8 Integrate helmet textures

Apply a layer mask to your helmet fabric layer and integrate edges using a black 10% Opacity soft-edged brush. Merge this and the complete model layer into a new, whole final model layer. Open a new document that's 23 x 30 centimetres at 300dpi with a black background. Create a new layer titled 'Mesh' and select Filter>Vanishing Point.

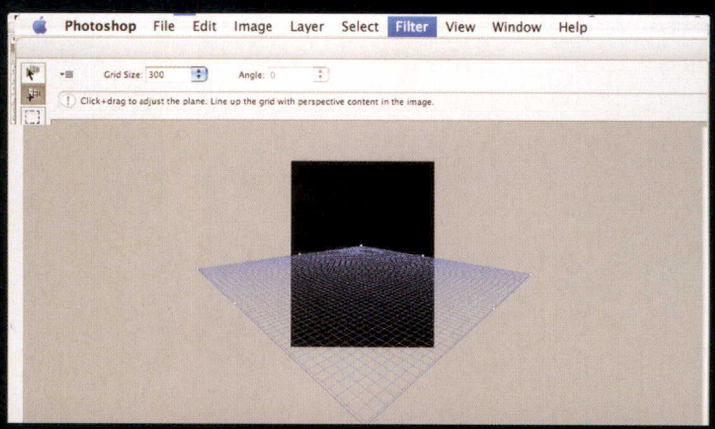


Blending brushes

Blending modes, when used correctly, can really liven up the lighting and colour within your composition. However, brush blending modes, selectable from the Options bar when activating the Brush tool, allow you to apply far more localised and controlled effects. For example, if you are looking to really bring out strong, almost fluorescent effects, then you should apply Color Dodge blending brushes, preferably with white. This is great for creating bleeding light, manual flares, space-related lighting and strobe effects. Screen brushes are perfect for creating soft hue lighting, best suited to atmospheric lighting effects. These include creating colourised light reflection, ambient hazes or to soften harsh exposures, and cool or heat colour-cast image areas. Always pay constant attention to your brush's Opacity and Fill settings, as these will have a large bearing on the strength and impact of any effect you apply.

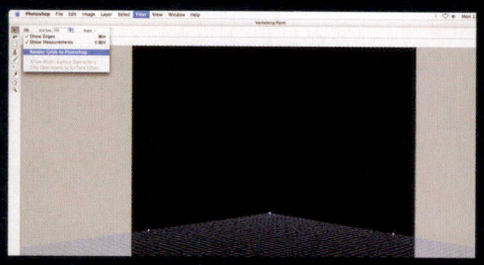
9 Vanishing Point filter

Select the Create Plane tool and add an anchor point in the centre of your background. Draw a mesh, starting at the vanishing point and moving outwards, as in the example. If your grid is red you can use the Edit Plane tool until you correct your perspective and it turns blue. Set your Grid Size to around 300.



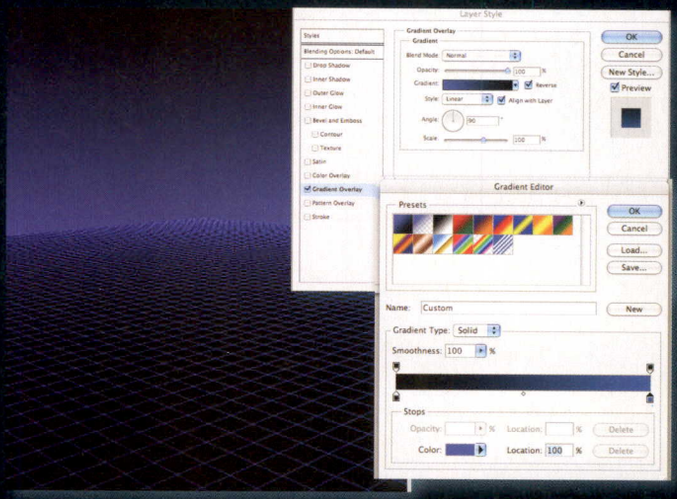
10 Background sections

In the 'Settings and commands for Vanishing Point' drop-down options (top left), activate Render Grids to Photoshop. Click OK and, with your Mesh layer activated, press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate it. With your duplicate layer active, select the Magic Wand tool and click on the black background area. Activate the Background layer and press Cmd/Ctrl+J, creating a new segment layer.



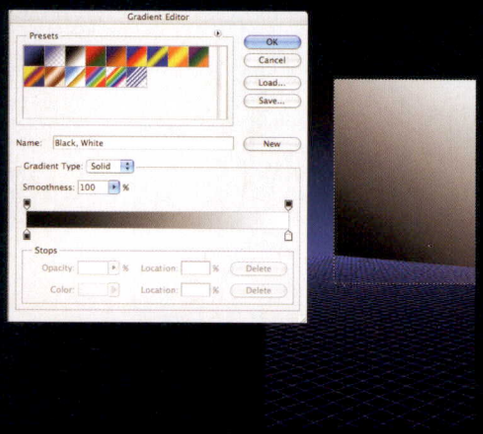
11 Gradient Overlay FX

Next, with this duplicate segment layer active, take a look in the FX layer options and select Gradient Overlay. Now, in the Options dialog box, activate the Reverse option and then set a black to dull blue gradient. Create a new layer above this segment layer. Now select the Rectangle Marquee tool and draw a selection over half of this background segment, from the right to the centre vanishing point. At this point, it is all starting to come together and beginning to look like an environment straight out of *Tron*.



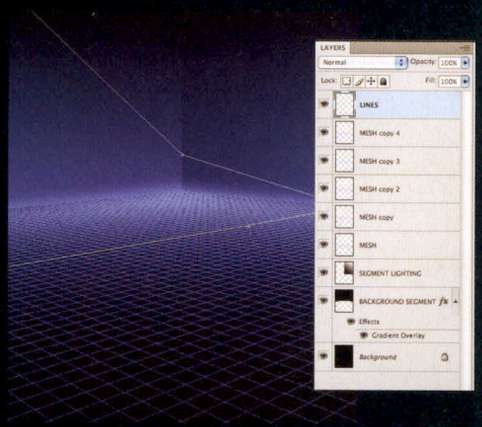
12 Gradient tool

Select the Gradient tool from the toolbar and apply a Black, White style from bottom left to top right. Set an Overlay blending mode at 25% Opacity. Activate the Mesh copy layer, duplicating this by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+J. Select Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and apply a 50-pixel radius.



13 Background lighting

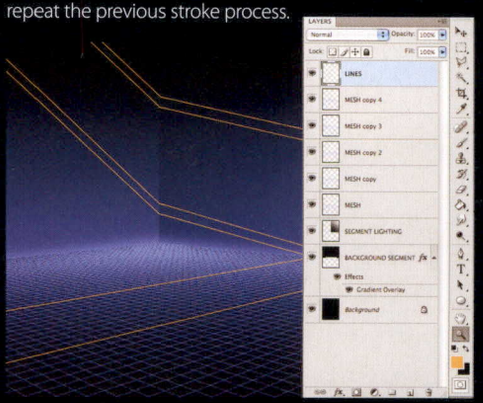
Apply a Screen blending mode to this layer before duplicating twice more. Create a new layer named 'Lines', select the Pen Path tool and apply directional lines that run along your grid lines and up the wall at diagonal angles. This creates a sense of movement and decoration.



> Take a break from your composition. You will feel the benefit of returning with fresh eyes, as you will be able to see anything that looks slightly askew in the image. Additionally, a cup of coffee will provide the perfect boost for the final stages of this tutorial!

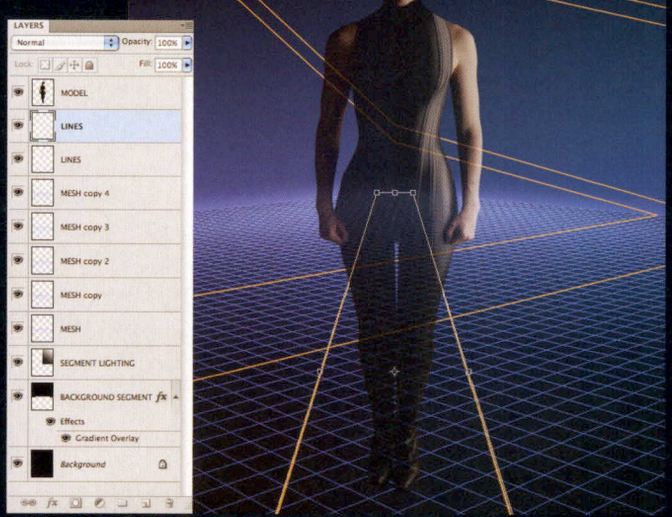
14 Pen Path stroke

Choose a pale orange hard-edged five-pixel brush at 100% Opacity. Activate the Paths palette and Ctrl/right-click your Work Path and select Stroke Path from the drop-down options, making sure it is set to Brush and Simulate Pressure is unticked. Delete the Work Path. On the same Lines layer, draw a parallel line and repeat the previous stroke process.



15 Create a vanishing point

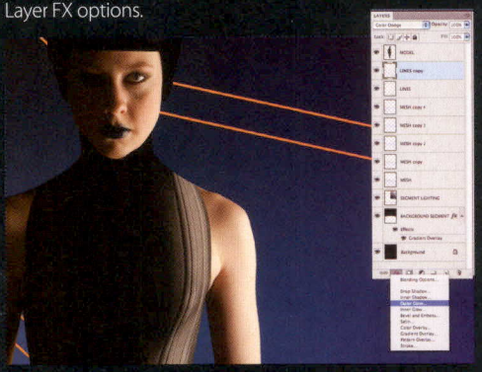
Copy and paste your final model layer into your backdrop image. Create a set of adjacent lines that run straight down the middle of your backdrop, creating a vanishing point. Do this with two parallel lines on a new lines layer, applying a seven-pixel brushstroke. Use Edit> Transform Scale and Perspective options to edit the correct perspective. At this stage, take a break from your composition. You will feel the benefit of returning with fresh eyes, as you will be able to see anything that looks slightly askew in the image. Additionally, a cup of coffee will provide the perfect boost for the final stages of this tutorial!



Tutorial

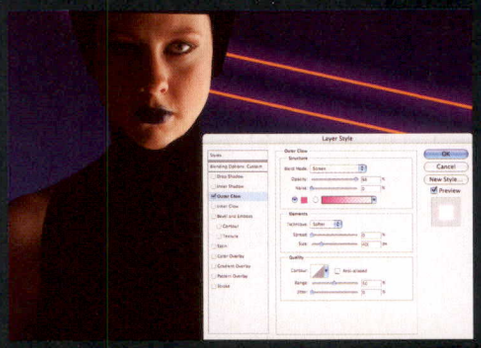
16 Variation adjustments

Now add as many extra lines as you like, running along the walls and floor of your backdrop. Merge all line layers into one and duplicate. Select Image>Adjustment>Variations, adding Coarse More Red, altering line tones accordingly. Next, apply a Color Dodge blending mode and select Outer Glow from the Layer FX options.



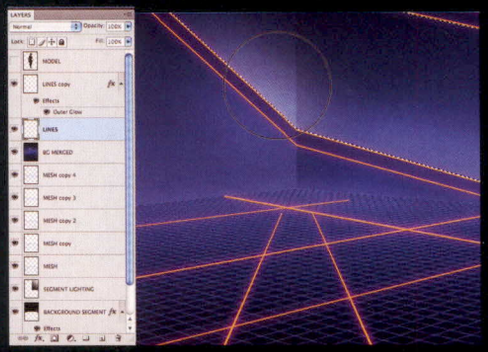
17 Outer Glow settings

Apply a pink '#fe16c5' tone, with a Screen blending mode at 98% Opacity. Set the Size to 40px. You'll now have cool glow effects. However, remember that light reflects, so start by selecting the Magic Wand tool and apply this to the gaps between your lines. Hide your line and model layers, pressing Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E, merging your background into a single layer.



18 Blending brushes

Reveal your line layers again and, with a white Overlay blending mode soft-edged brush set at 30% Opacity and Flow, apply along line edges to your newly merged background layer. Apply a 10% Dodge tool set to highlights on top before revealing your model layer. Activate your model layer and duplicate this, placing the new layer beneath the original.

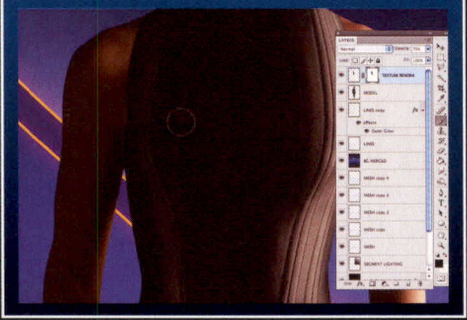


19 Model exposures

Select Color Overlay from the FX options, applying a '#4b7dee' blue. From the same option set, apply a Normal blending mode Outer Flow at 75% Opacity, 40px Size with the same blue. Add a 15px Gaussian Blur. Activate and duplicate your original model once more, dropping the new layer between this and your blue blur layer. Set a white Color Overlay and an eight-pixel Gaussian Blur.

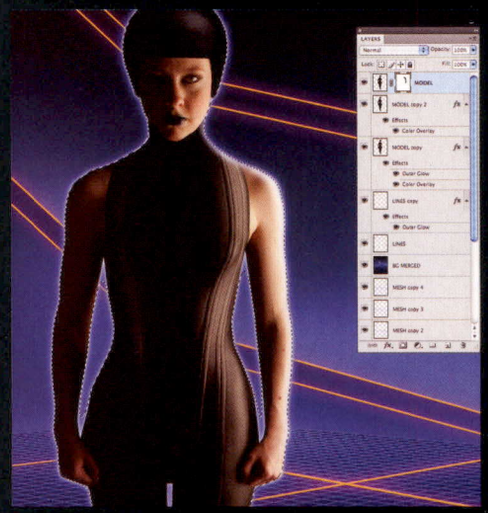
Just before step 20...

At this point we noticed that our model was seemingly heavy to one side, and we decided that this was due to the thick shadow falling on one side of her figure. To remedy this, we used the Marquee selection tools to isolate the fabric lining on the right, and copied, pasted and flipped this horizontally to the left. Layer Opacity was lowered to 70%, before a layer mask and 30% Opacity black brush treatment was applied to integrate edges. Then we merged this only with the model layer and proceeded.



20 Feathers and layer masks

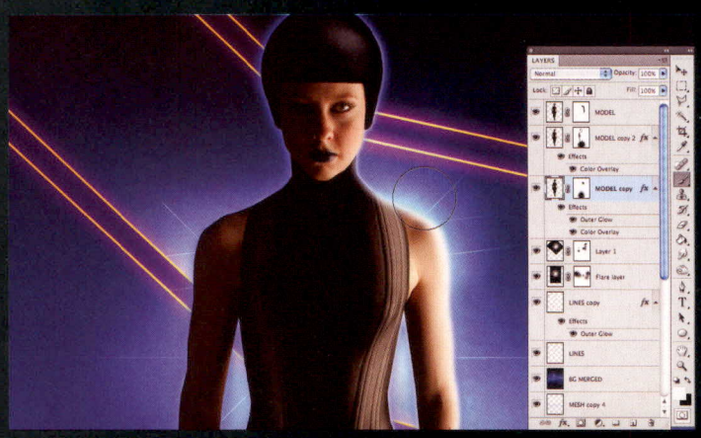
Activate your original model layer, apply a layer mask and Cmd/Ctrl-click the model thumbnail. Choose Select>Modify>Feather, set at a Radius of 20. Press Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I and apply a 70% black soft-edged brush to the right-hand side of your model, bleeding light. Deactivate this selection and apply a layer mask to your whiteout model duplicate.



> "Remember that light reflects, so start by selecting the Magic Wand tool and apply this to the gaps between your lines. Hide your line and model layers, merging your background into a single layer"

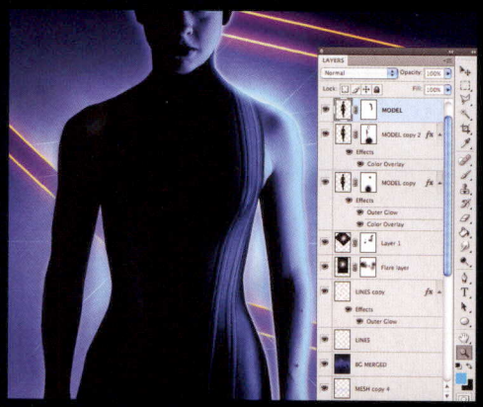
21 Lens flare effects

Erase from the right-hand side and helmet of this layer. Apply a layer mask to the blue duplicate model layer, erasing gradually up from the feet. Copy and paste in your Flare Layer.psds, transforming these behind all model layers. Apply a Color Dodge blending mode. You can apply layer masks to these and duplicate model layers to integrate effects.



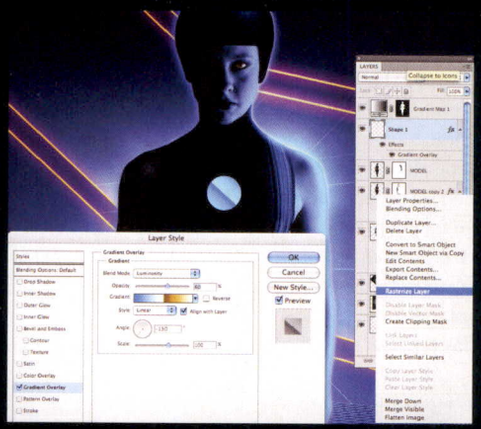
22 Gradient Map skin recolour

Select Gradient Map from the Layers palette adjustment layer options, and load BLUESKIN.grd from the disc. Set a Hard Light blending mode and Cmd/Ctrl-click your model layer thumbnail. Invert the selection by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I. Apply a 100% black brush to the Gradient Map layer mask. Use this same brush to reveal original eye colour and a 10% brush to lighten shadows on the left side of the face and arm.



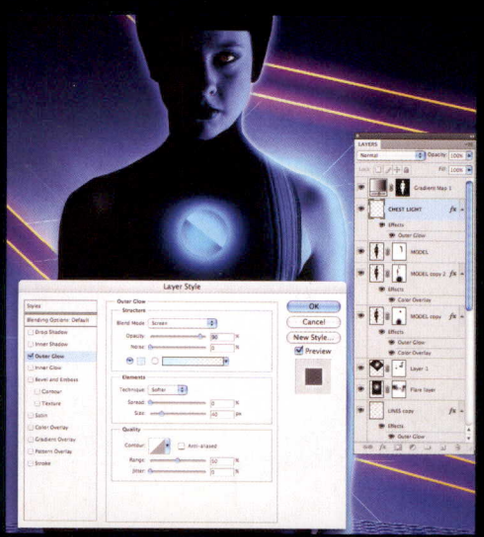
23 Costume focal point

Select the Ellipse tool, drawing a circle in the chest area. This will be our main light source. Place this layer beneath your Gradient Map, and select Gradient Overlay from the FX options. Apply a Linear Chrome Gradient at 60% Opacity, set to Luminosity, at -130 degrees. Convert to a Smart Object and then Rasterise. Select a soft-edged light blue 50% Overlay brush.

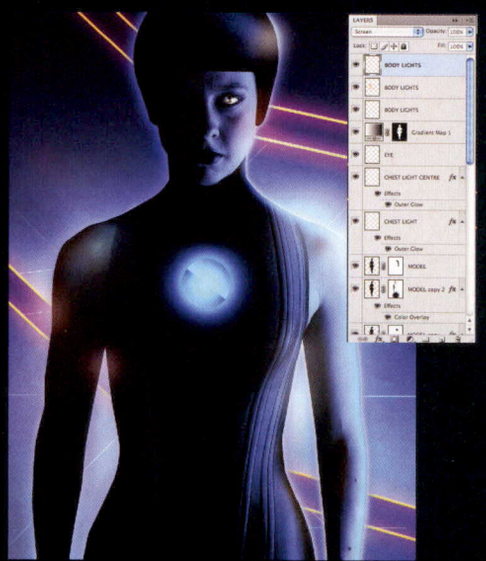


24 Glow effects

Apply this to the centre of your chrome shape and a large brush size over the shape's perimeter. Apply an ice blue Screen blending mode Outer Glow with 90% Opacity, 46px Size and 50% Range. Create a smaller rasterised light blue circle and place it in the centre of your chest piece. Apply a light yellow 75% Outer Glow with 39% Spread, 46px Size and 50% Range.



> "Now you can intuitively isolate costume lighting pattern areas. You can also elaborate and heighten image effects by using the brush effects you have learnt throughout this tutorial"



25 Manual lighting effects

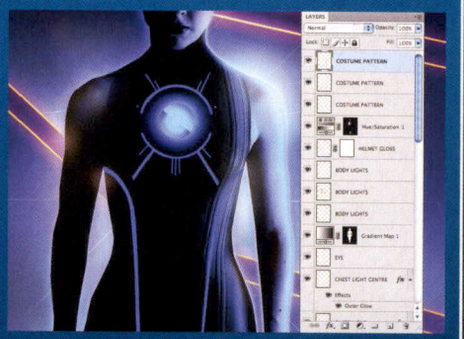
To make realistic light fall on the model, begin by creating a new Color Dodge layer and then apply a 10% soft-edged brush to the outskirts of the torso, shoulders and facial features. Use corresponding external lighting colours, too. Apply a cool orange Screen blending brush on a 50% Overlay layer to your model's hands and right arm. Finally, touch up your highlights using 50% soft-edged brushes set to the Screen blending layer.

Final effects

We look at the final fashion touches you can make to your image

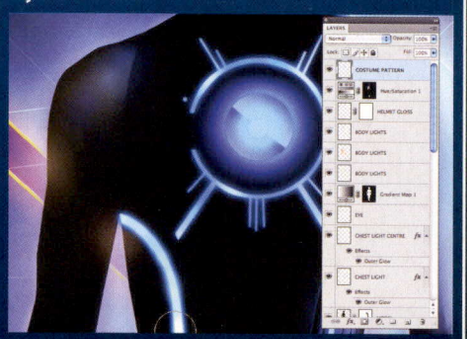
Step 1: Block patterns

All that's left for us to do is to decorate our model costume with recognisable fluorescent patterns, which are iconic in the *Tron* movies. To draw the basic shapes you can either use Brush tools, applied with a pen tablet, or rasterised Pen Path layers. Apply these in a rich blue tone.



Step 2: Outer Glow settings

Apply Outer Glow layer styles to your shape pattern layers. Set the blending mode to Linear Dodge (Add) at 100%, with Size at 16px. Use a '#0e65ae' blue tone. Apply a 10% white Color Dodge and 50% Normal soft-edged brush to create pulsating light effects. Merge all pattern layers into one.



Step 3: Lighting additions

Now you can intuitively isolate costume lighting pattern areas and apply varying brightness percentages of 105mm Prime Flare filters. You can also elaborate and heighten image effects by using the brush effects you have learnt throughout this tutorial.

Tim Tadder

Website: www.timtadder.com
Clients: Miller, Pepsi, Ubisoft, McDonald's, adidas, Microsoft, TYR, Sony

Tim Tadder's creative path was found through education – but not quite how you'd expect. "I was a high school computer teacher and I started playing around in Photoshop 2.0 back in 1997," he explains. "I would play with photos while my students were working on projects in class."

Knowing that he wasn't going to stay a teacher for long, Tadder began a 'search and destroy' mission on every publication he could find that printed the image styles he created. "Eventually someone gave me an assignment to cover a parade for a local travel publication," he reveals. He has since worked for international clients such as Pepsi, Ubisoft and McDonald's, among others. Photoshop is still an important part of creating his hard-edged, hyperreal imagery. "It comes into the equation after the edits are done in Adobe Lightroom or Capture One PRO. Depending on the complexity of the image, I may spend a few hours or even days putting together pieces of the visual puzzle," he explains.

Tadder is keen to reveal a ton of new works he is now producing, most of which are high-profile commercial jobs: "I've just finished a cool Go Go Girls shoot, which was pretty sick. There's work running in Europe for Marlboro and all over the US in magazines and billboards. We have ads running in publications such as *Outside* and *ESPN*. He also likes to endorse those peers who inspire Tim Tadder projects: "We use The Orange Apple (**www.theorangeapple.ca**) in Canada to handle overflow, so have to mention the work they do. Other studios with which we collaborate are S&B, Taylor James and Electric Art."

BUBBLE: *"This image was part of the TYR campaign. It was a single image just styled by us. Pretty simple but beautiful all the same"*

NINJAS: *"We created this image after the models contacted us directly and said, 'Hey, we are stunt people and we want to shoot with you.' I figured that would be amazing, so this is what we came up with. Amazing women with swords – how could you go wrong?"*

MOVIE MAGIC: *"This was created for Sony as part of a catalogue for the VAIO Computer range. It was a collaboration with The Orange Apple, where we worked together to create the final magic of this image"*

CONTROLLED CHAOS IN YOUR GRAPHICS PROJECTS

We explore high-end depth-of-field and photoreal graphic effects

Graphic design has always been about a measure of aesthetic control through image organisation. However, digital styles are prompting a far more organic process – an almost controlled chaos. Contemporary styles are embracing the fractured visual style of this discipline, yet are far more liberal in their application of illustrated and photo elements. Focus is created through highly intricate details and basic symmetry. Themed colour palettes also play a major role, the most attractive being the white, black and red spectrum.

This graphics tutorial looks at ways to manage your stock more professionally through clinical image editing, manageable layer effects and lavish special effects. We apply a range of Photoshop tools and techniques. Channels are the main focus in preproduction, and we then use the layer style and adjustment layer options to get the best out of colour adjustments. We also use basic Blur filter effects for their principal purpose – creating subtle yet effective depth-of-field effects.

These are all complemented by sophisticated layer mask editing and brush creation and application, producing commercial effects that you can apply in your own personal and professional projects – so let's get started!

Our expert

Adam Smith
www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk/Adam

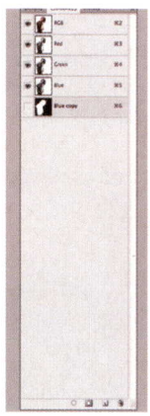
In this tutorial, Adam puts his graphical eye and digital skills to the test, replicating commercial styles in an easy-to-follow fashion. He writes for *Advanced Photoshop* magazine.

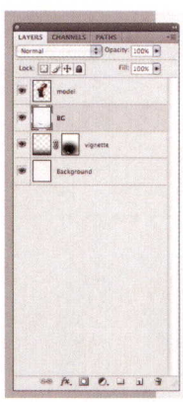
Source files

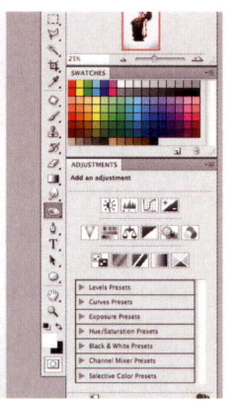
This month we've provided a set of iStock resources for you to replicate this commercial effect. All other resources are provided by *Advanced Photoshop* or are downloadable from **www.sxc.hu** royalty-free. International photographer Lise Gagne (**www.lisegagne.com**) has supplied wonderful paint stock.

1 Clean cut

Open the 'iStock_000011701532.jpg' and select the Channels palette. Duplicate the Blue channel and apply Levels to this layer until the shadows and highlights define hard edges. Invert your layer and paint out the model in white. Cmd/Ctrl-click this layer's thumbnail, then reactivate the Layers palette and copy and paste into a new document, 23.5 x 30.2cm, 300dpi.







2 Minimal shadow

With a light grey background, add a black to transparent gradient on a new layer, with Opacity at 40%. Add a layer mask and create a vignette effect at the foot of your image. Hide your model layer, and merge the background layers together. Show your model layer again and use a 30% Burn tool, set to Midtones, to create a shadow beneath your model.

3 Channel exposure effects

Activate the Channels palette, duplicate your Blue channel once more and tweak this using Levels to create heightened exposure. Select this duplicate layer with the Marquee tool, activate your Layers palette and copy/paste it into your layer stack. Set this to a Multiply blending mode, Opacity at 50%, Fill at 80%.

4 Space in space

Apply a Black & White adjustment layer. Tweak your Red and Yellow sliders for effect before applying a 75% Fill. Paste in the 'iStock_000002075106.jpg' and reposition it across your image. Duplicate, resize and edit the space layers using layer masks, applying Hard Light blending modes (see the screenshot). Download image number '1249801' from **www.sxc.hu** and paste into your composition.

5 Ripple effects

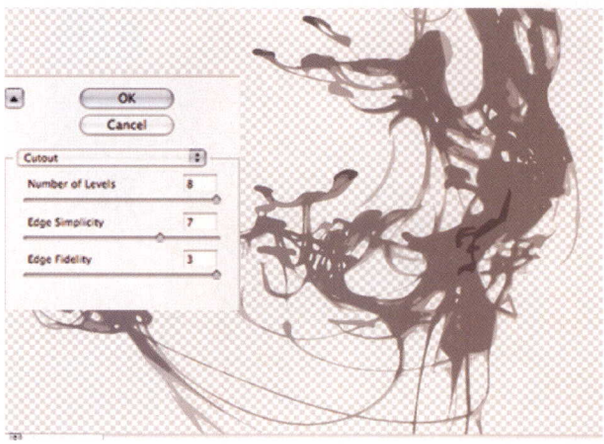
Place a ripple layer beneath your model layer. Apply a Soft Light blending mode at 60% Opacity, using a layer mask to integrate the edges. Duplicate this layer, then apply a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, activating Colorize. Set Hue to 0, Saturation to 57, the layer blending mode to Multiply, with 40% Opacity. Use layer masks to isolate colour effects to space layers. Now merge all into a single layer.

7 Displacement selections

Cmd/Ctrl-click this displacement shape layer thumbnail and copy/paste it from your merged layer. You can do this several times, moving and resizing duplicate displacement layers, creating displacement effects (see the screenshot). Hide your merged layer. Select a white Ellipse tool and draw a large circle behind your model layer. Select Gradient Overlay from the layer style (Fx) options.

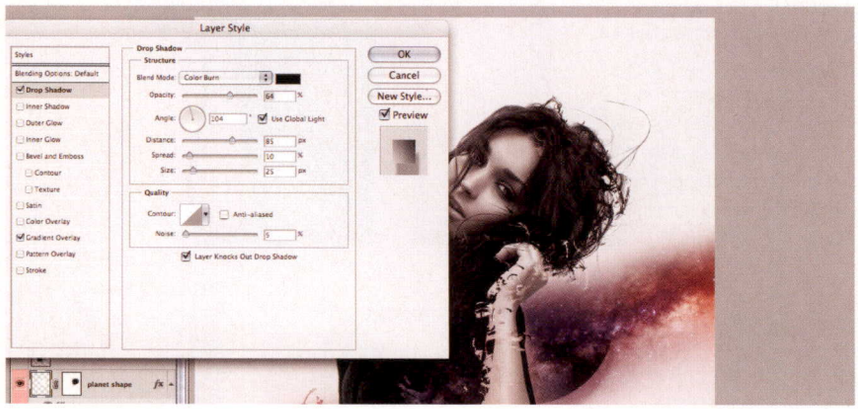
6 Displacement template

Download and open image number '464536' from **www.sxc.hu** and create a displacement shape with it. To do this, unlock the layer, activate the Marquee tool, Ctrl/right-click the layer and select Color Range. Select Highlights then Cmd/Ctrl+X. Desaturate and apply Filter> Artistic>Cutout; set Number of Levels to 8, Edge Simplicity to 7, Edge Fidelity to 3. You can edit this shape before copy/pasting it into your image file.



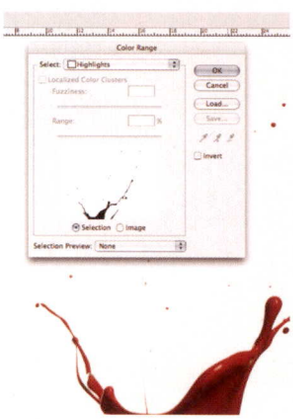
8 Gradient Overlay FX

Apply a black to white Gradient Overlay at a 151-degree Angle. From the same option set select Drop Shadow, setting the Blend Mode to Color Burn, Opacity to 64%, Angle to 104 degrees. Set Distance to 85px, Spread to 10%, Size to 25px. Now apply a layer mask and paint away the top of this shape with a soft black brush.



9 Symmetry and paint effects

You can choose to create more planetoids with these techniques and Fx settings, creating depth. On the opposing side draw a large grey circle, set a Multiply blending mode with 40% Opacity, erasing edges with a layer mask. Open 'A 16768.jpg' from the CD and go to Color Range>Select> Highlights, cutting away white value. Desaturate and copy/paste it into your image.

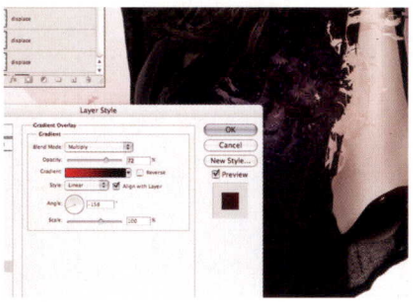


Create and apply cloud brushes

To produce effects in accordance with the image's symmetry, we've applied cloud brushes on the upper section at 45 degrees. Creating this brush is easy. Open the cloud image; Desaturate. In Image>Adjustments> Levels, increase Shadow/Lightness values, creating high exposure. Inverse the selection and hit Edit>Define Brush Preset. Name the brush then find it in your brush set. Apply to a new layer with a white brush, using Edit> Transform to place. Reapply light grey cloud brushes on existing types to flesh out effects.

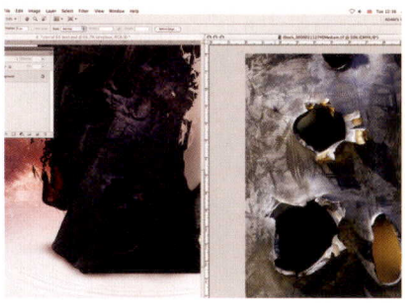
10 Bullet holes

Place this paint layer in line with the model's left elbow. Apply a red to black, 72% Opacity Gradient Overlay. Set the Blend Mode to Multiply and Angle to -158 degrees. Open 'iStock_000002112740.jpg'. Copy/paste the bullet holes into the image. Rescale and position on the model's torso. Set to Overlay and mask away edges. Copy the layer.



11 Depth of field effect

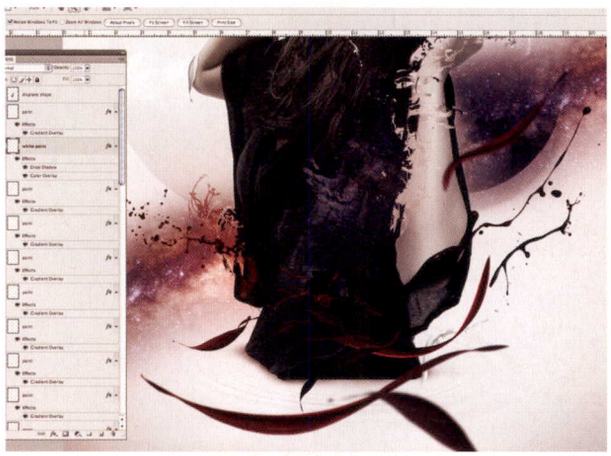
Using techniques in steps 9/10, paste in other paint images and apply Gradient Overlay settings. You can affect the lightness of a gradient by having the Layer Style window open and using the Move tool to position the gradient effect. Build layers from background to foreground, rescaling and adding Gaussian Blur to create depth of field.



> You can affect the lightness of a gradient by using the Move tool to position the gradient effect

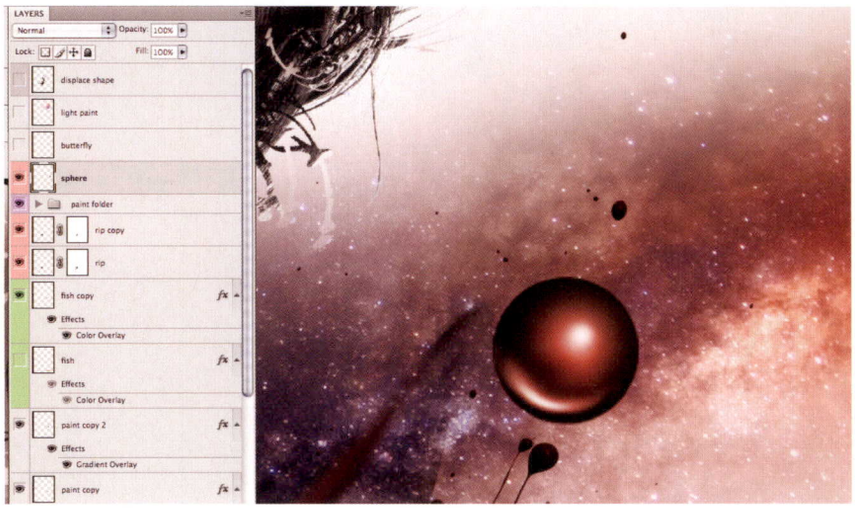
12 Depth rules

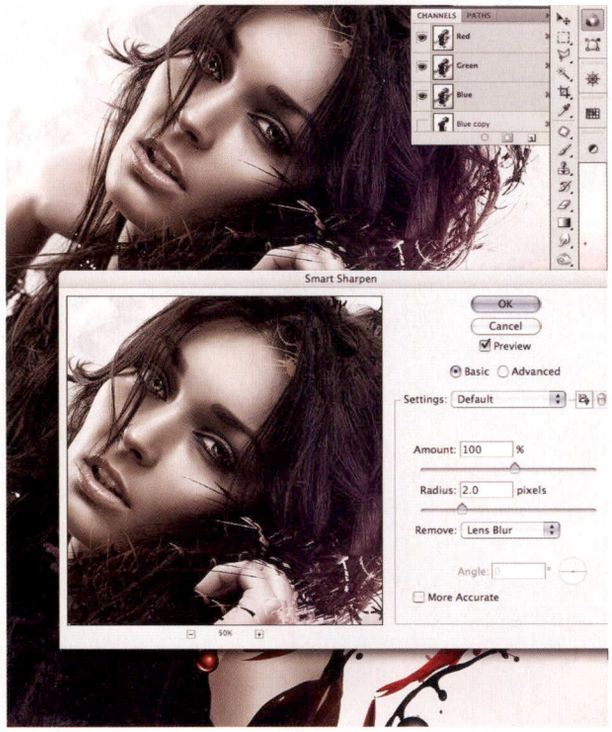
Background paint textures are smaller. Foreground paint elements have strong Gaussian Blur effects . Create white gloss paint elements via Copy>Paste>Desaturate; apply a white Color Overlay set to Color Blend Mode and tweak.



13 Sphere effects

Select the Eclipse tool, hold Shift, drag and create a large dark red circle. Rasterize the shape and Cmd/Ctrl-click the layer thumbnail. Select a Midtones Dodge brush at 30-40% Opacity and apply with a brush size that fits into your shape. With a smaller soft white brush at 40% Opacity, apply on top of the Dodge brush.



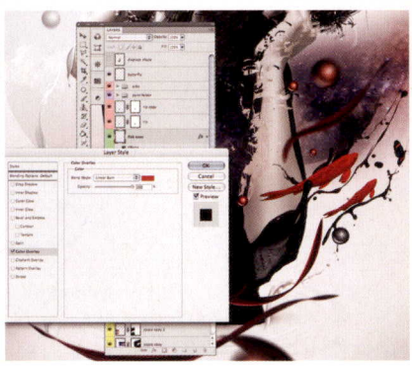


14 Varying styles

You can work into shape edges too, complementing the 3D effect. Much like paint layers, you can copy, rescale and blur sphere shapes, heightening depth-of-field effects. To create white and black spheres, paint light and dark grey rasterised shapes. Editing levels can heighten exposure effects.

15 Adding more elements

With all these techniques you can build up intricate elements, again complementing depth of field. Add elements that create movement and symmetry, like the fish in this scene. These were copy/pasted, resized and adjusted with the Warp tool, then a red Color Overlay (Linear Burn) added.



16 Finishing touches

Some additional effects will complement the aesthetics of your graphical piece and its intricacy. We have applied a 'night light' stock image set to Screen blending mode. A Hue/Saturation adjustment layer was also applied (set to Colorize), integrating with a layer mask. Lastly, slight retouching with the Dodge and Burn tools and a Smart Sharpen filter was applied to the final merged layer.

CREATE A FUTURISTIC PIXEL PORTRAIT

How to make a portrait with a modern twist using traditional impressionist techniques

Beside the essentially limitless freedom that the layer system in Photoshop offers artists, the other major draw of this amazing program has to be the ability to make custom brushes. These unique brushes give each and every artist incredible control and creative licence to realise their most exciting visions.

In this tutorial we will be taking a portrait shot of a woman's face, and through some fairly simple techniques, turn it into a hyper-detailed illustration. We will predominantly utilise the Brush tool to create a high level of detail in a small amount of time.

The inspiration for this type of effect came from experimenting with an impressionist style concept; using thousands of small points of colour to create an image. The theory is that by creating lots of different coloured 'pixels' that are clustered together, when viewed from further away, a rich image is created.

Topics covered include painting with custom brushes, layer blending modes, masking and layer effects. To get the right mix of detail and negative space, our weapon of choice will be the Brush tool, creating custom brushes to paint hundreds of pixels. This will provide the control needed to perfect the image.

Our expert

Christopher Haines
www.neondreams.com.au

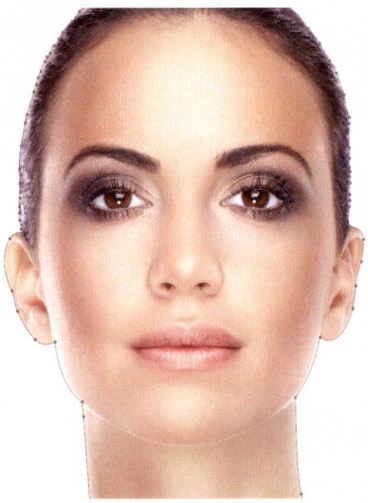
Christopher is from Perth, Australia and has been a digital artist for six years. A member of Depthcore, he's worked for several global clients.

Source files

Included on the CD is the start image for this tutorial, from iStockphoto.com by the photographer Giorgio Gruizza.

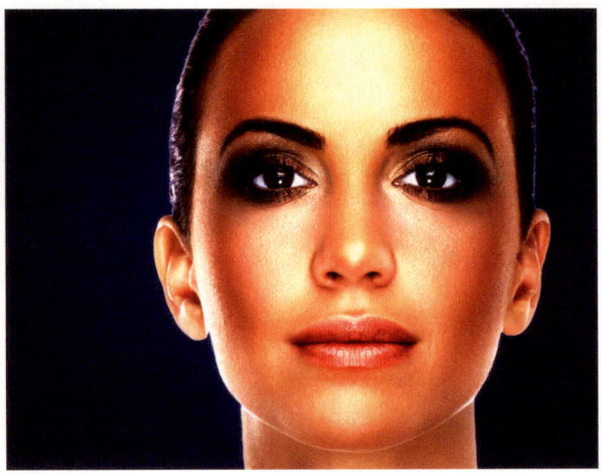
01 The stock model

When we open the photo of the model, the first task we need to tackle is to separate her from the background. Select the Pen tool and start tracing around the edge of her face. Don't worry about being too precise with the hair. Ctrl/right-click and choose Make Selection, then hit OK. Copy and Paste the face to a new layer and name it 'Base Photo'.



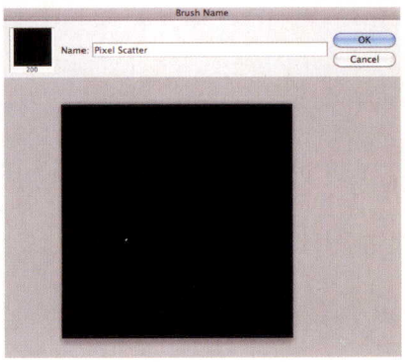
02 Adjustments

To give the photo a stronger contrast, open up the Levels panel (Cmd/Ctrl+L). Set the Input Levels sliders to 0, 0.35, 244. Select the background layer. In the Color palette, make the foreground colour a medium blue and the background dark blue. Using the Gradient tool, create a circular gradient.



03 Custom brush

Open a new document (Cmd/Ctrl+N) and make it 200 pixels square. Fill the canvas with black, then select Edit>Define Brush Preset. Name the brush 'Pixel' and click OK. Select your Brush tool (B) and open up the Brushes palette. Select the Pixel brush you just created. This will be our detailing brush.



The Brush tool

The main tool we will need to master to create an image in this pixellated style is the custom Brush tool. With the right knowledge of its different settings, we can save a lot of time in creating just the right effect. Select the Brush tool (B) and bring up the Brushes palette (Window>Brushes). A lot of the standard presets are great, or you can even define your own.

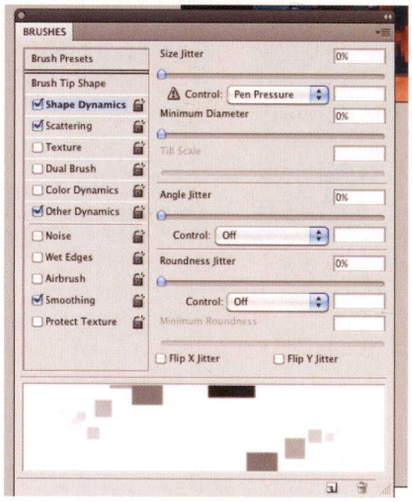
In Step 4, you will see a number of presets that come with Photoshop. A brush preset is essentially a solid black shape that can have other settings applied to it, and with a colour selected, can be used to paint on the canvas. You will notice most settings have a Control drop-down menu. This can be set to Pen Pressure if you have a graphics tablet, or to Off if you're just using a mouse.

The first setting is Shape Dynamics and this is what controls the flow of the shape as the cursor is dragged from one point to the other. We will be utilising the Scatter function the most for this particular tutorial, as it takes the shape and repeats it along the brush stroke. The final setting we will be using is Other Dynamics. This helps control the opacity from the start of the stroke to the end.

> The inspiration for this effect came from experimenting with an impressionist style concept, using thousands of small points of colour

04 Brush settings

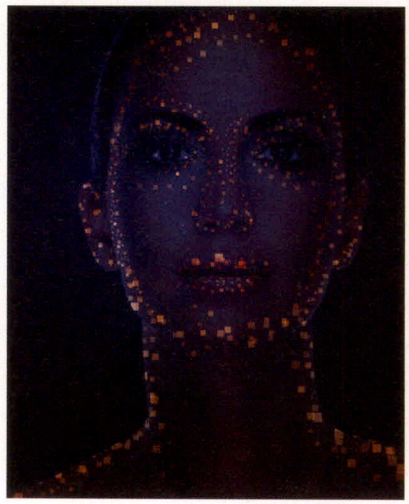
Select Brush Tip Shape and set Spacing to 350%. Check the Shape Dynamics box, check Scattering and set to 500%. Also activate Other Dynamics. Set the Control of each option to Pen Pressure if you have a graphics tablet, otherwise leave the setting as Off. Click on the page icon at the bottom of the palette to create a new brush. Name it 'Pixel Scatter'.



> Keyboard shortcuts can really help speed up your workflow. Alter the brush size via the square bracket keys... [and] cycle through your brush presets using the comma and full stop keys

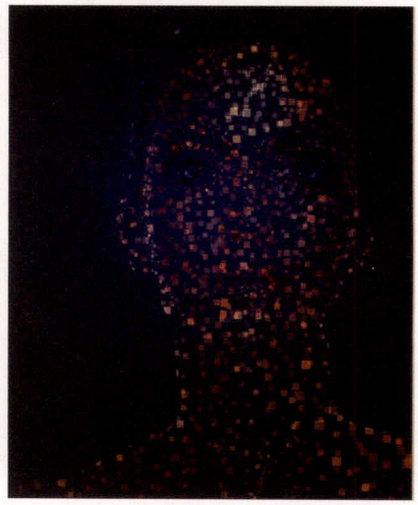
05 Creating the pixels

Duplicate the Base Photo layer, name it 'Guide' and set Opacity to 20%. This will help you plot your painting. Now we start to paint the pixels. Go to Layer>Layer Mask>Hide All. With the Pixel Scatter brush selected, start to paint strokes along the face, following its contours.



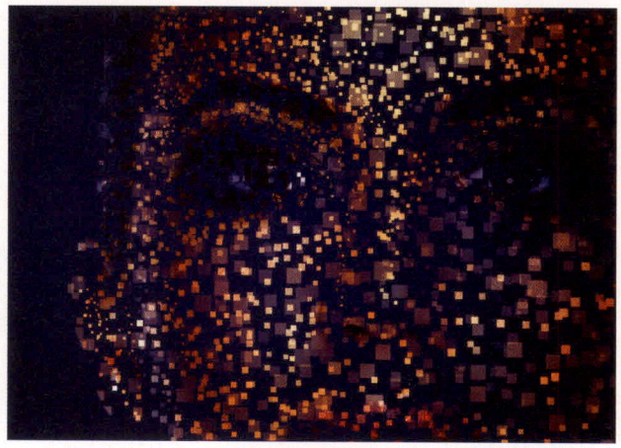
06 Base layer

Continue to fill in the rest of the face and neck. Make sure there is a good spread of different sized pixels. Turn off the Guide layer to check how it is looking. This is the most translucent base layer of the illustration so don't worry if it looks a little flat.



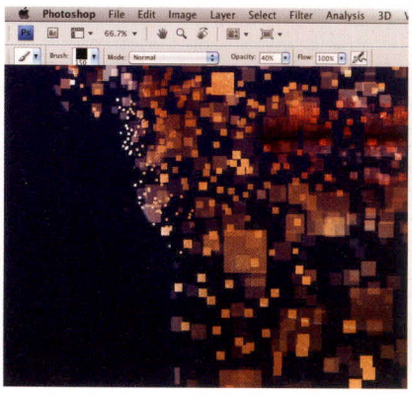
07 Coverage

Duplicate the Base Photo layer and name it 'Level 2'. Next, select the layer mask and fill it with black colour in order to clear the mask. Now you can paint in a series of more opaque pixels. We recommend you use a smaller brush size for this step for convenience. Try to fill in the gaps between the base layer pixels.



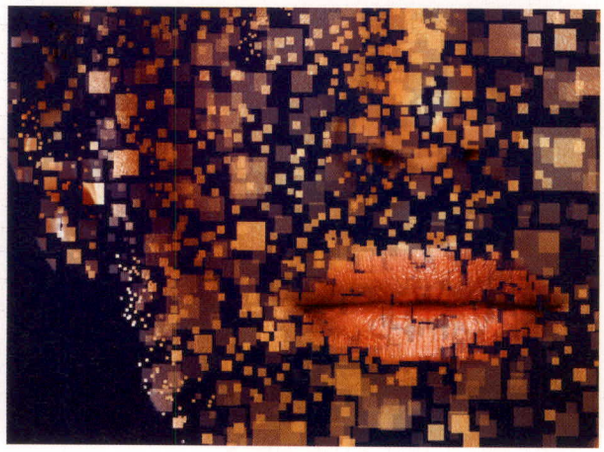
08 Larger pixels

Now set your brush Size to around 150px and the Opacity to 40%. This layer helps to differentiate between the more solid pixels and gives the image a sense of depth. Start to paint larger squares within the skin tones. Space these out across the portrait, but use them more sparingly than the smaller pixels.



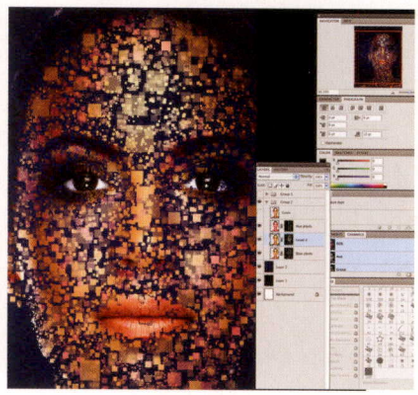
09 Key features

There are certain key features of the face that need to be almost completely filled in, ie the eyes and mouth. Take your Pixel brush (the one that doesn't scatter), and set it to 100% Opacity. Start to paint in large squares over these areas to really define them.



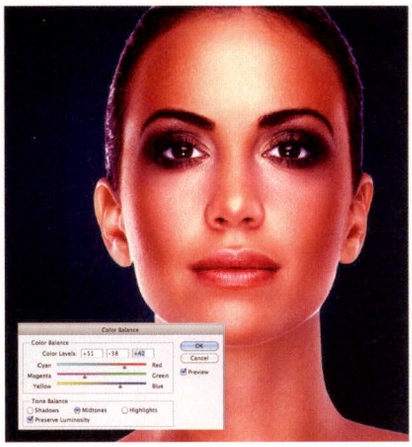
10 Fill in the gaps

Go back to your Base Photo layer. Start to fill in more of the gaps. At this point, you really need to be controlling the opacity and size of the pixels by hand. Zoom in to detail the image, but zoom out regularly to about 25% to see if it is working cohesively as a whole.



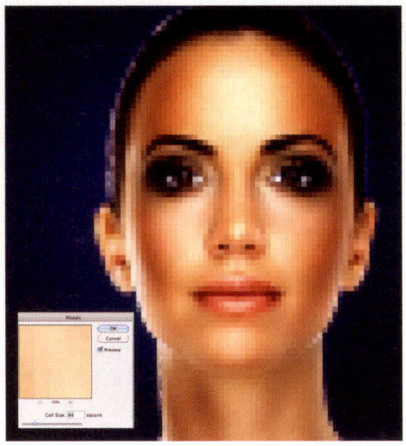
11 Hue

Duplicate the Level 2 layer and fill the mask with black. Name the layer 'Hue pixels'. Disable the layer mask and bring up Color Balance (Cmd/Ctrl+B). Set the Color Levels to 51, -38, 42. Enable the mask and start to paint in more 'coverage' pixels. This is to help bring life to the skin tones.



12 Filter effects

Now we will use a filter to fill in some more detail. Duplicate the Level 2 layer and name it 'Level 3'. Go to Filter>Pixelate>Mosaic. Set the Cell Size to about 44 pixels. Continue to detail the image as with the previous layer. This will be a layer of solid colour pixels without texture.

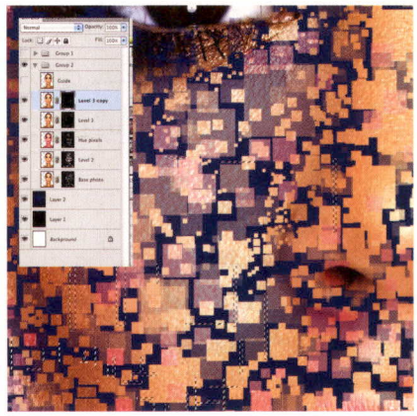


Quick tip

Keyboard shortcuts can really help speed up your workflow. Some shortcuts we can use when painting the pixels are opacity and brush size. You can alter the brush size by pressing the right and left square bracket keys: '[' and ']'. You can also cycle through your brush presets using the comma and full stop keys.

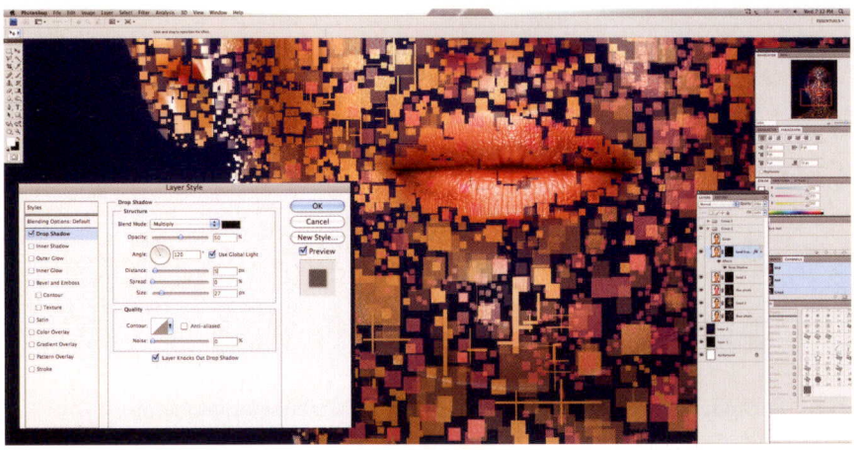
13 Network

We need to create a 'network' of shapes to bridge the gap between the other pixels. Duplicate the Level 3 layer and fill the mask with black. With the Rectangle Marquee tool (M), start to select slender rectangles around the skin tones. Hold down Shift to add more to the selection. Fill the selection with white.



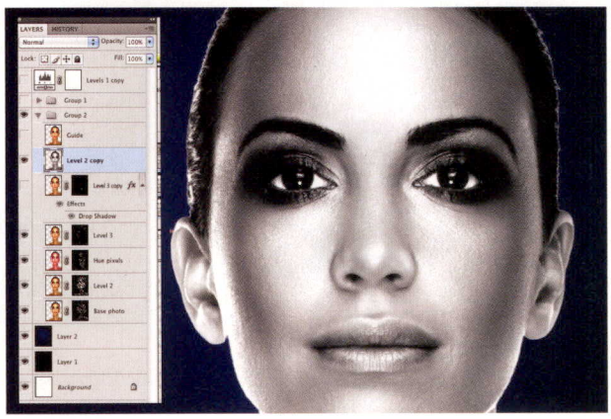
14 Drop shadow

To help this layer stand above the others, we need to add a subtle drop shadow. Go to Layer>Layer Style>Drop Shadow. Set the size to about 27px and the Opacity to 50%. Continue to make selections across the whole of the face to create a dense network.



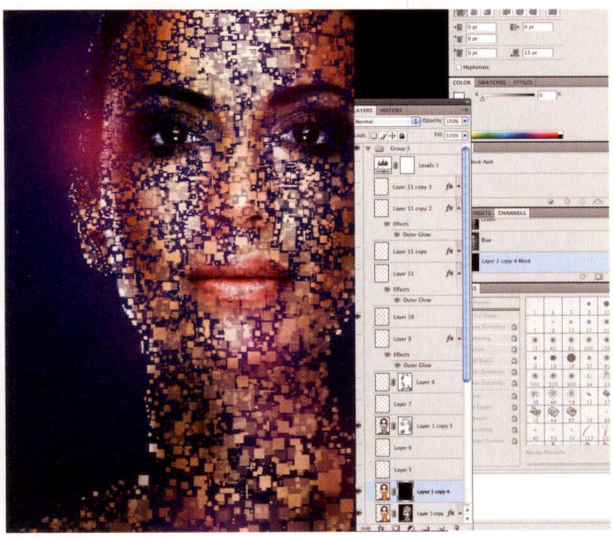
15 Overlay depth

To help the face appear 3D, we need an overlay. Duplicate the base layers and move to the top of the stack. Delete the layer mask, desaturate the image (Image>Adjustments>Desaturate) and bump up the contrast with Levels. Set the blending to Overlay and Opacity to 20%.



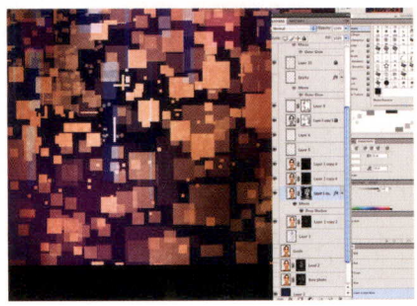
16 Atmosphere

The next step involves adding some atmosphere. Create a new layer and name it 'Atmosphere'. Now, choose a large soft brush and set it to around 20%. We suggest you use a bright neon pink colour. In various places around the image, start to paint soft atmosphere and colour highlights for effect. Finally, select a dark navy colour and paint around the edges of the face and neck to add further depth to the composition as a whole.



17 Translucent pixels

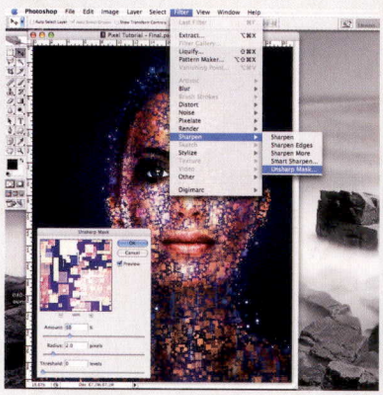
To add further energy, create a new layer and name it 'Translucent pixels'. Again choose a neon pink and blue, then select your single pixel brush. Set the Opacity to 50%. Around the edges of the face and neck, paint large pixels. You don't need a great amount, just enough to add some life.



> A good trick is to use the Sharpen filter to really highlight those small details. Never use the Sharpen filter more than a few times though

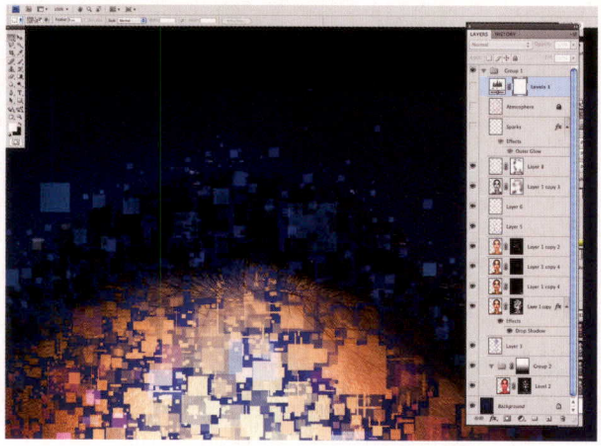
Sharpen up

When you flatten the image and reduce it for web size, a lot of the detail that was apparent up close can sometimes get lost. A good trick is to use the Sharpen filter to really highlight those small details. Never use the Sharpen filter more than a few times though, as you risk over-sharpening, which can damage the quality of the finished image.



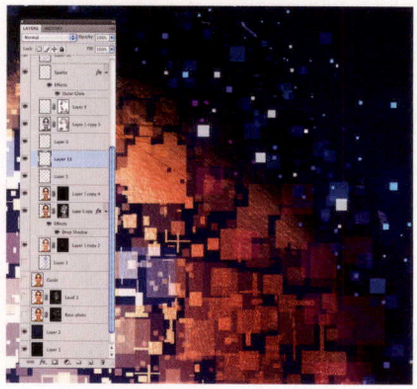
18 More colour pixels

Create a new layer called 'Colour Pixels'. Bump the Opacity of your brush back up to 100% and reduce the brush Size to about 7. Paint in more pixels around the hair in blue and the skin tones in pink. This will add yet another layer of complexity.



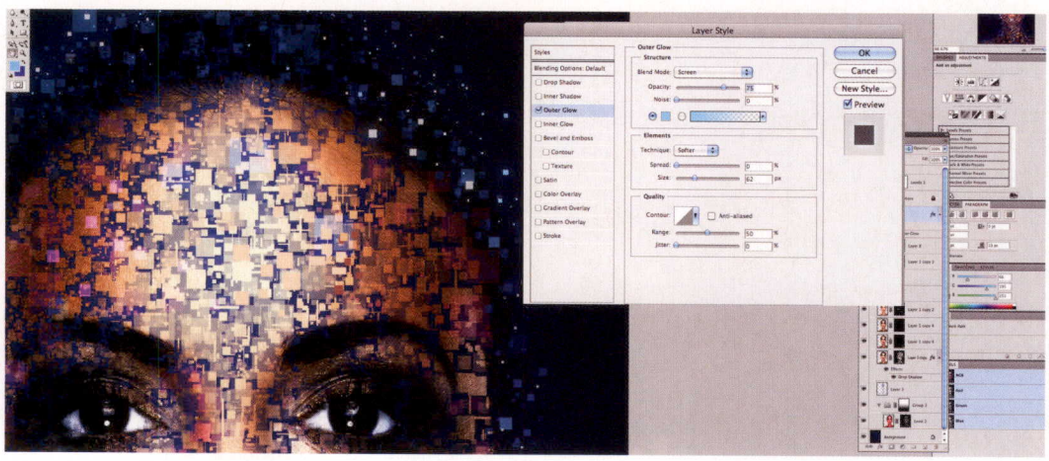
19 Sparks

Now to add some spark to the image. Create a new layer and call it 'Sparks'. Set your pixel brush to a small size and then select a white colour. Start to paint little pixels around the edges of the face, like they are fizzing away into the background. Make sure to vary the size and spread of this layer.



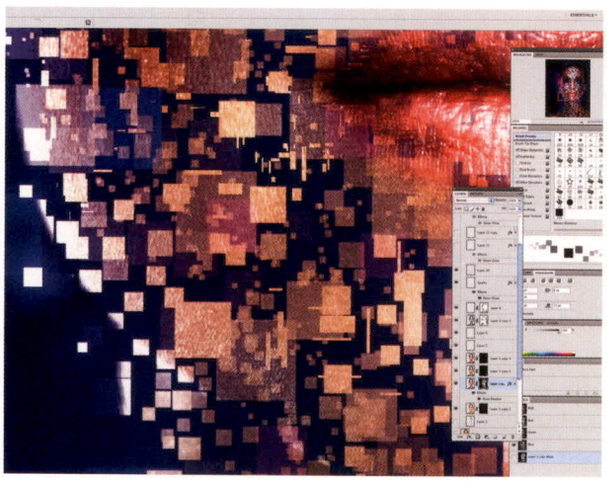
20 Glow

With the Sparks layer still selected, we are going to add a glow to help them pop off the background. Go to Layer>Layer Style>Outer Glow. Select a neon blue as the colour and adjust the Size to around 62px. Leave the other settings as they are.



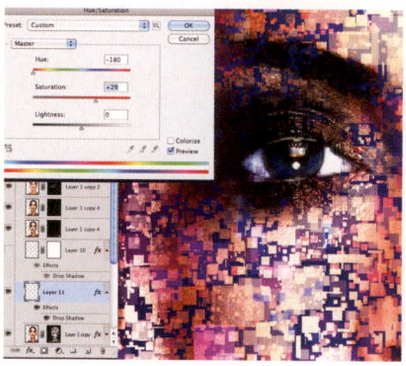
21 Cleaning up the edges

Where the edge of the photo ends, there is an unnatural curve to some of the pixels. This is because the photo has ended before the mask has. To clean it up, change your colour to black and paint out these edges. Try to keep the edge fairly uneven to give the effect that it is breaking apart.



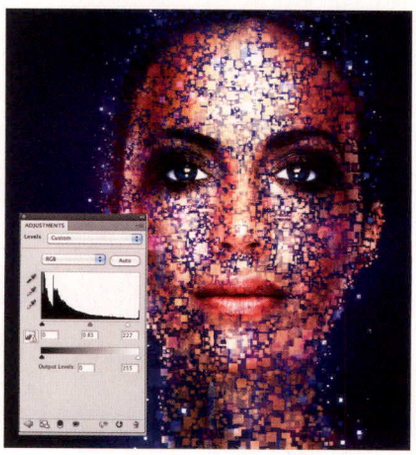
22 Colouring the eyes

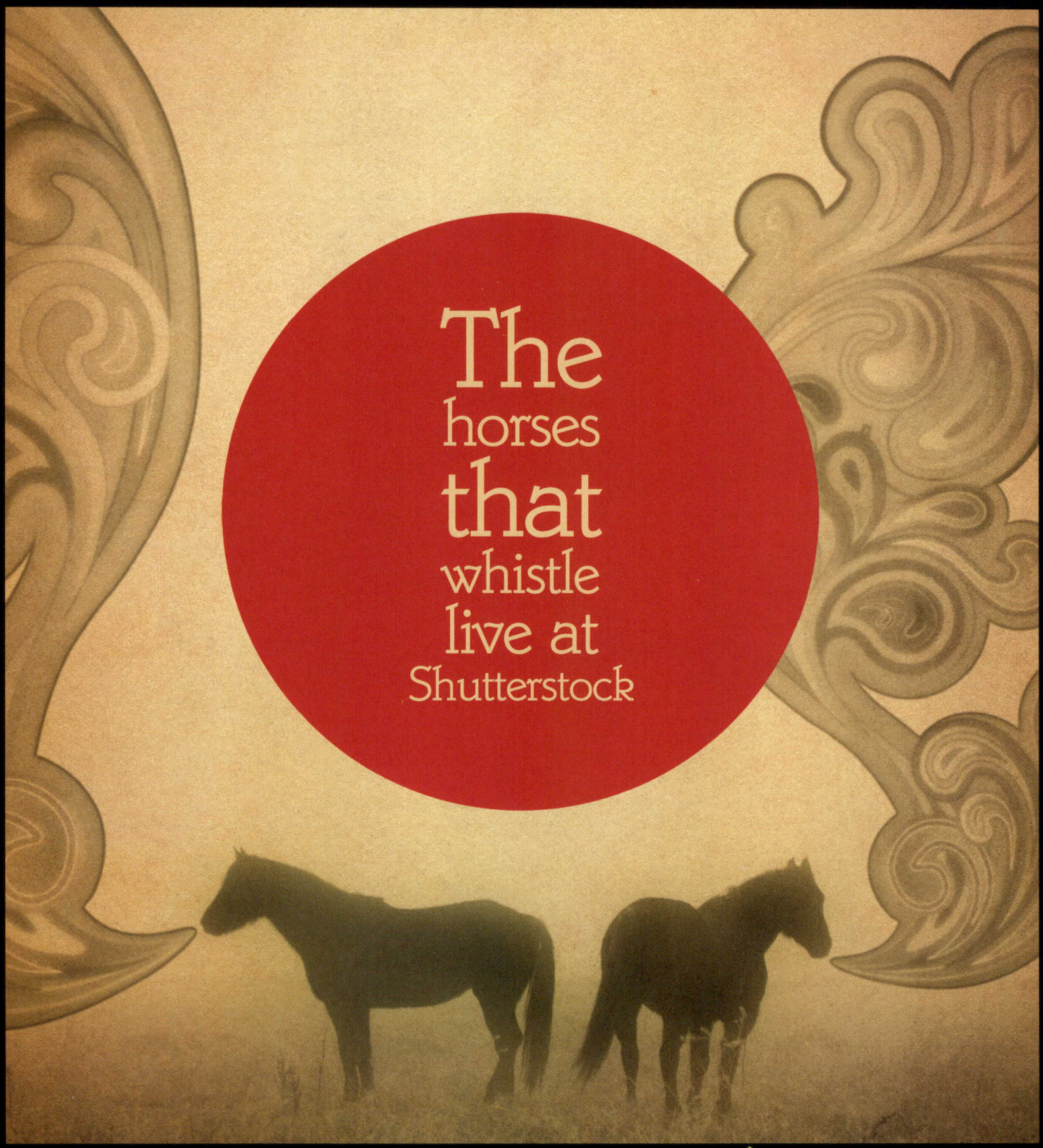
The eyes are looking quite dark at the moment so, using the Lasso tool (L), select them from a base layer and duplicate them. Bump up the contrast until you reveal the brown irises. Open the Hue/Saturation palette (Cmd/Ctrl+U) and drag the slider to the left and increase the Saturation. Use a soft Eraser to blend in the edges.



23 Final adjustments

As a final touch, some adjustment layers can be added. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Levels. Set the values to 0, 0.83, 277. This will add just a bit more contrast to the image.





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SURREAL LIGHTING EFFECTS

Salvador Dalí is one of the all-time masters of surrealist art and this tutorial looks to digitally re-imagine one of his greatest works

Our expert

Elena Savitskaya
www.elenasavitskaya.com

Elena Savitskaya is a freelance graphic designer from London. She comes from a marketing management background, but has been working in the design field for six years.

Source files

We've included nine watercolour flowers for this tutorial and a list of additional stock images that can be downloaded for free on the disc. You'll also find a speed video showing the workflow of the full project.

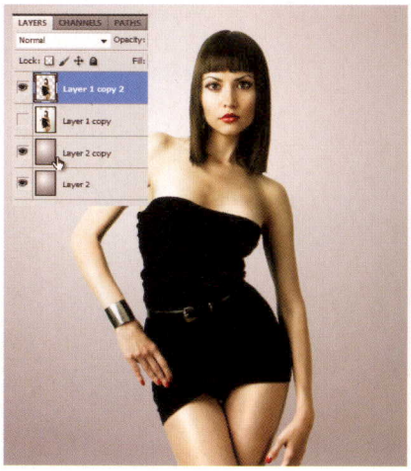
Inspiration for this tutorial came from the famous Salvador Dalí painting *Woman with a Head of Roses* (1935). Salvador Dalí is one of the most celebrated surrealism painters of all time, so with the new wave of surrealism emerging hand in hand with the rising popularity of digital manipulation, it's about time to pay tribute to the master.

The best way to start any artwork is with a sketch. It helps you determine the overall composition, saves time on figuring out the concept and serves as a general guideline to make sure you stay on track. The key idea behind surrealism has always been going beyond boundaries of reason and reality, while still retaining a meaningful hidden message. In this piece we will try to create a very feminine theme based on a woman's allure, charm and mystery.

You won't need any special equipment, as the majority of the tutorial is completed using just Photoshop and its default tools and filters. A graphic tablet won't be necessary either, so this dynamic, flora-based image really is open to all to re-create, so enjoy!

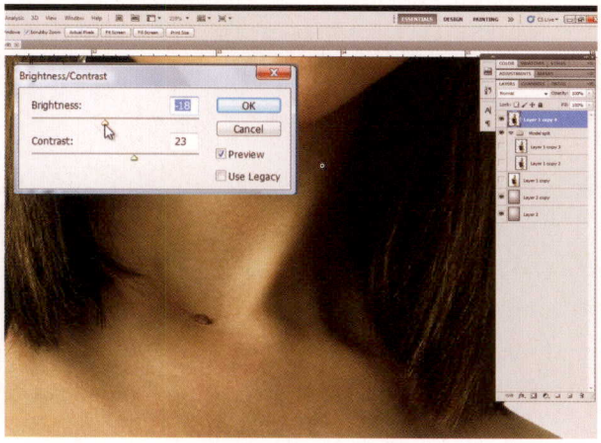
01 Prepare the image

Firstly cut out the model; the best way is to use the Pen tool. Create paths around the model following the bodylines, right-click the shape, hit Make Selection and delete the background area. Create a layer behind the model and fill it with a Radial grey gradient.



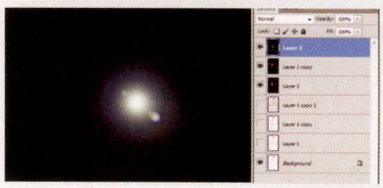
02 Small retouch

Copy the model layer, set the new layer to Multiply blending mode at 38% Opacity and merge the layers. Using the Healing Brush tool, remove blemishes and dark circles around the eyes. Go to Image> Adjustments>Photo Filter and use Warming Filter (85) with 15% Density. Go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation and reduce Saturation to -29. Go to Image>Adjustments>Brightness/Contrast and set Contrast to 23 and Brightness to -18.



Lens flares

Create a new file in Photoshop and make sure it's set to RGB. You'll need a pretty big canvas so set it to A4. Fill the background with black and then go to Filter>Render> Lens Flare. Play around with settings so the flare has the minimum circles around it and is kept fairly small. Once done, Copy the canvas, Paste it into your artwork and set blending to Color Dodge. To adjust the light's tone, go to Image>Adjustments> Hue/Saturation, check Colorize and play around with colours. To change the shape of the light, hit Cmd/Ctrl+T and stretch it horizontally. For further adjustments, go to Filter>Distort>Twirl and play with settings to create more intricate light curves.



> The key idea behind surrealism has always been going beyond boundaries of reason and reality, while still retaining a meaningful hidden message

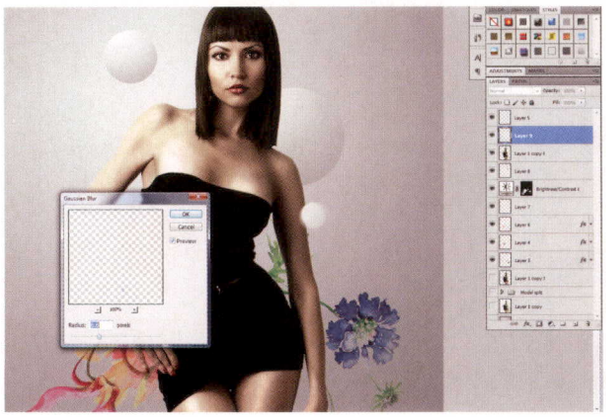
03 Add watercolour flowers

Open the watercolour flower images supplied on the CD, Copy and Paste them into the artwork, setting all flower layers to Multiply blending mode. We will reposition them later, but for now just pick your favourites and play with colours and levels until you're satisfied.

Tutorial

04 Add spheres

Using the Elliptical Marquee tool, create a selection on a new layer and fill it with a Radial grey gradient. Add in a few more spheres and scatter them around the scene; remember to place some in front of the model. Go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and set it to 6.6 to create the illusion of depth of field. Go to Filter>Blur>Motion Blur and set Angle to 37 and Distance to 19.



> Using the Elliptical Marquee tool, create a selection on a new layer and fill it with a Radial grey gradient. Add in a few spheres and scatter them around the scene

05 Flower power

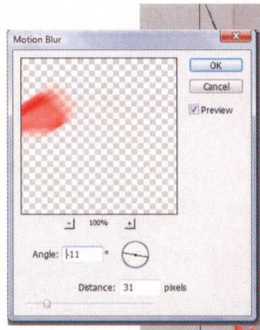
Using flower stock imagery photos (see references on Word doc on the CD) cut out a range of flowers and start creating the display around the model's head. Use the Transform tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T) to quickly resize different flower images. Use the Eraser tool with a soft brush to erase and blend images together to leave a rounded 'wig'. You can use the Pen tool to cut out smaller elements more precisely.

06 Finish the flower wig

Continue to form the flower 'afro' until you're happy with the results. Make sure it covers as much of the model's real hair as possible. If the colours of the flowers don't match, use Image> Adjustments>Hue/Saturation to tweak overall colour balance. Once you've blended, merge all the flower layers together (Layer>Merge Visible) so that the floral wig is just one layer.

07 Petals

Open the Petals image, go to Image>Adjustments> Brightness/Contrast and increase the contrast of the image. Remove the white background using Select>Color Range, click on the white background and delete the selection. Copy the petals into the artwork. Go to Image> Transform>Warp and adjust the flow of the petals. The last step for the petals at this stage is to go to Filter>Blur>Motion Blur and set Angle to -11 and Distance to 31.



Quick tip

The whole point of creating surreal artwork is to have fun experimenting. These steps are not hard and fast rules, so feel free to import your own stock imagery and come up with something more personal.

08 Add shadows

Repeat Step 7 until you create a swirl-like movement of petals around the model. Once done, Cmd/Ctrl-click the model layer thumbnail and then the wig layer thumbnail. With this joint selection, create a new layer, fill it with a dark grey colour and place behind the model. Change the blending mode to Multiply. Add Gaussian Blur and erase in places to increase realism.

09 Streaks ahead

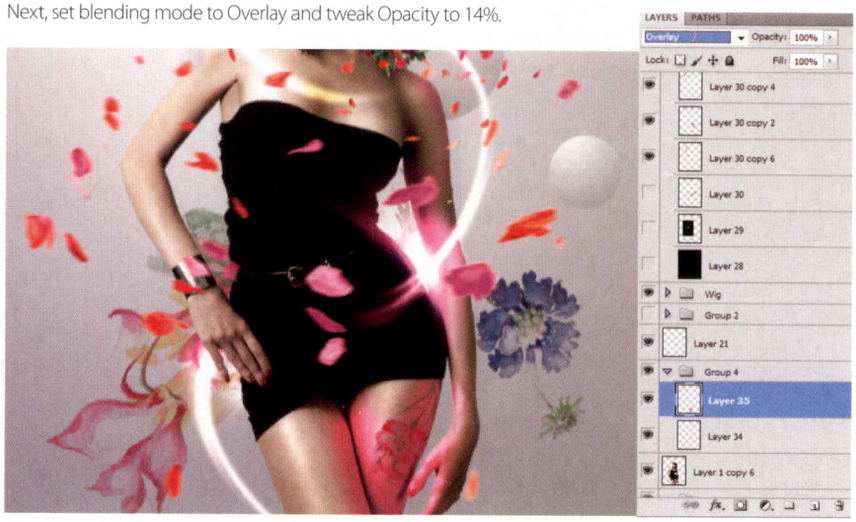
Create a curve of light (see boxout on page 62), then go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/ Saturation, check Colorize and give the light a pink tint. Play around with the Twirl filter and create a few different shapes from the light. Duplicate the layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J) a few times and add several more light streaks. Use the Warp tool to manipulate the shape of the light.

10 Harmonise colours

Add a few more light streaks around the model's hips and head for a more natural flow. Pick a soft round brush with pink, set the Brush Mode to Color and start painting over petals on the petal layer and also over the wig. This will help give the picture a more harmonious colour scheme. Make sure you have relevant layers selected (Cmd/Ctrl-click on thumbnails) when painting.

11 Create highlights on the body

Pick a large soft round brush and create a new layer on top of the model. Cmd/Ctrl-click the model layer thumbnail to create a selection and, on the new layer, start painting the pink highlights on the model's shoulders, hips, legs and dress. Make sure you follow the light lines so that highlights look realistic. Next, set blending mode to Overlay and tweak Opacity to 14%.



12 Black splashes

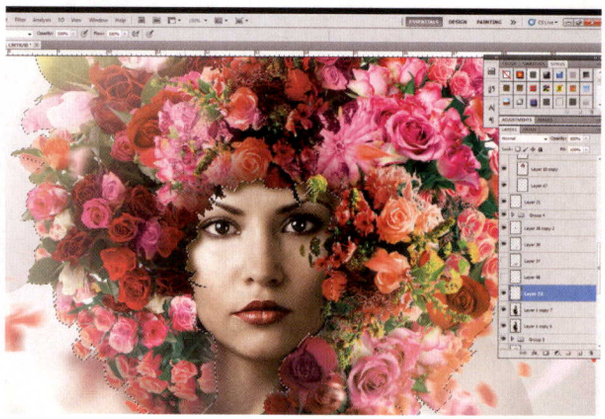
Create another new layer and load spatter brushes in your brush menu. Pick a brush with a black colour and place a few splashes on top of the model's dress and near the legs. Use the Eraser to refine the shape of the splash. Repeat a few times.

13 Think pink

Pick a large soft round brush with a very bright baby pink colour, and create a new layer which is set to Screen. Paint a few big light blobs around the model to create the illusion of misty light. Reduce the opacity of the layer if necessary.

14 It's all in the details

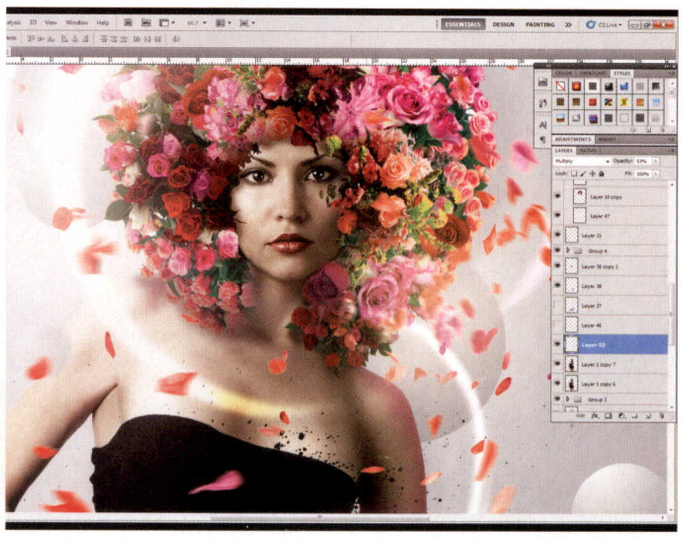
Hide the wig layer. Now, using the Patch tool, paint over the model's hair while sampling skin around her neck, so that the hair is not visible underneath. Reselect the wig layer and inverse the selection. Create a new layer and, using a soft round brush with a brown colour applied, start painting shadows that are cast by the wig across the model's face and shoulders.



> Using a soft round brush with a brown colour applied, start painting shadows that are cast by the wig across the model's face and shoulders

15 Dodge and Burn

First, set the shadow layer to Multiply blending and reduce the opacity as you see fit. Now select the wig layer again and activate the Burn tool. Darken the areas of the floral wig which frame the model's face as well as its outer edges to develop crisper definition. You can then repeat the process with the Dodge tool to produce highlights.



16 Finish with flowers

If you didn't open the watercolour flowers provided on the CD earlier, do it now. Resize and reposition the floral elements to your heart's content and ensure all flower layers are set to Multiply. Use the Eraser tool to remove unnecessary bits. You can duplicate favourite flowers as well via Cmd/Ctrl+J and reposition them around the model to complete the composition. All done, it should be looking blooming marvellous – even by Dalí's standards!

Tutorial

STUNNING SPACESCAPES

Create a striking space scene with advice from our professional artist

In this tutorial we will learn how to create a moody space image – an alien landscape, originally made with Terragen, from 3D asteroids and planets to realistic-looking stars and nebulae. Although other programs were used, Photoshop is the core place where everything is put together. In preparation for this tutorial it's helpful to pre-render landscapes in Terragen by taking photos of rocky areas or looking for high-quality mountain stocks.

Additional programs that can be helpful are not only Terragen 0.9, but also 3D software such as Cinema 4D or 3ds Max. These programs are not available for free, but Terragen can be downloaded for no charge (to use in personal projects only). Go to **www.planetside.co.uk**.

At the end of this tutorial you will discover how to create a planet as well as star system backgrounds only using Photoshop. And this information will no doubt be applicable to other projects that are not necessarily related to space exploration.

To get some impression of space and other inspirations for this and your own images, it's very useful to watch some of the well-known science-fiction movies, like *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*, or simply go through the NASA images at **www.nasa.gov**.

Tutorial

Our expert

Tobias Roetsch
www.gtgraphics.de

Roetsch has been focusing on space and science-fiction-based images as long as he's been doing art. Self-taught, he improves his skills step-by-step with a lot of patience and effort.

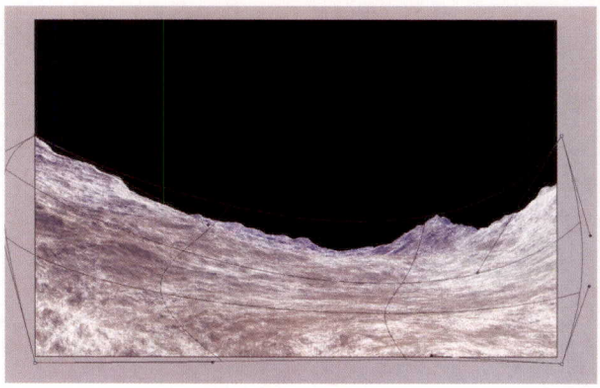
Source files

You will find Terragen renders and photos on the CD, as well as a link to one free texture used from CGTextures.com

> The foreground can be built out of photos or rendered landscapes. In this case we are going to use Terragen renders for a more extraterrestrial feeling

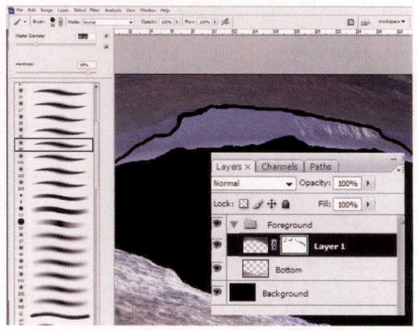
1 Foreground elements

Begin by creating a new document with a 5,500 x 3,500px black background. The foreground can be built out of photos or rendered landscapes. In this case we are going to use two Terragen renders for a more extraterrestrial feeling. Open the image 'terragen1.png' and use Edit>Transform>Warp. Do the same with 'terragen2.png' and flip it vertically, using Edit>Transform options to copy this screenshot.



2 Merging

To integrate both parts, several steps are necessary. To get more dynamics out of the above layer, apply a vector mask to this and use a black brush to cut off the parts you want. The advantage of such a mask is that you don't lose a certain part of the image definitely. You should combine all those layers to a foreground group (Cmd/Ctrl+G) for organisational purposes.

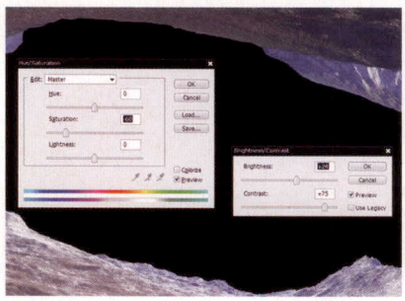


Quick tip

When you are creating spacescapes, you can use your own stock or images from free stock sites and image banks (like NASA's). By the time you have integrated images into the scene and worked on them you won't even be able to recognise them, so don't worry about using costly, high-resolution stock.

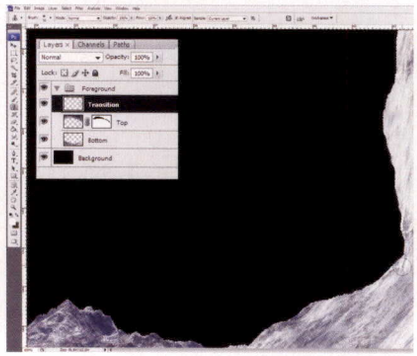
3 Light and colour

Now it's necessary to adjust the light and colour of the above layer. A good orientation is the highlights of the bottom landscape, as the light conditions should be similar in the upper half. First change the Contrast to +75 and the Brightness to +24, then press Cmd/Ctrl+U and set the Saturation to -60. You can also try to change the saturation of individual colours by choosing them in the Master drop-down option.



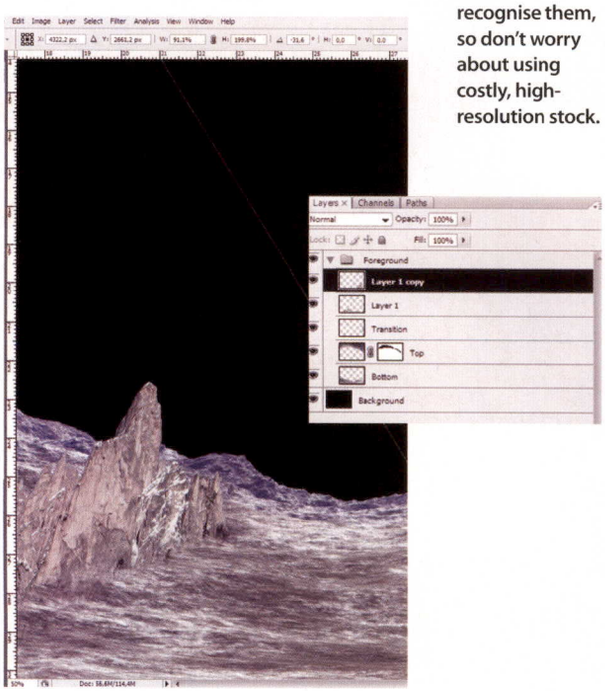
4 Extra rock detail

To get a more fluid transition, we need some more rocks. Press M and select the bottom-right corner of the upper landscape. Press Cmd/Ctrl+C and Cmd/Ctrl+V, enlarge it (Cmd/Ctrl+T) and rotate it a bit. It's also helpful to Warp this part and to use the Clone tool (S) to fill empty or non-fitting areas. Cut off the unimportant parts.



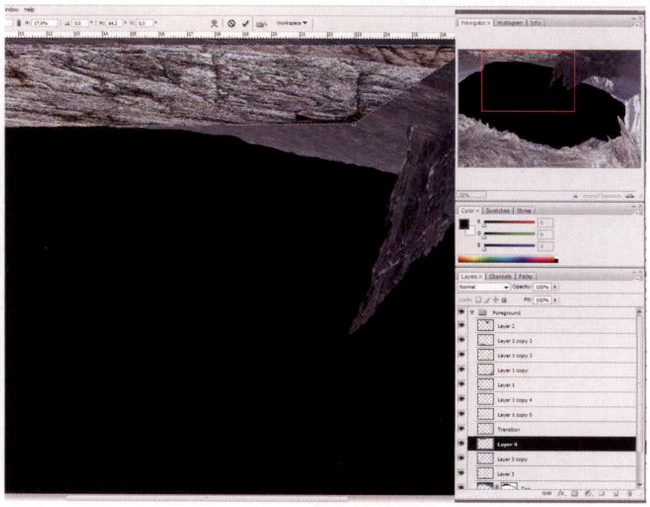
5 External stock

To get more details, we are going to add additional rocks. Here you can use mountain stocks ('mountain-1.jpg' from the CD or **www.sxc.hu**, which is a good source for this kind of stock). Cut off all un-needed parts, and adjust colours and lights as in the previous steps. To get more variety, use different stocks, transform them and place them all over the hole.



6 Detailing

The added rocks are not enough to delete the 3D feeling. With additional textures (from **www.cgtextures.com**) you can achieve a lot more depth and variety. It's important to adjust the perspective of those textures using Edit>Transform>Distort to keep the scene real. Set the Opacity of the texture layers to around 50-70%.

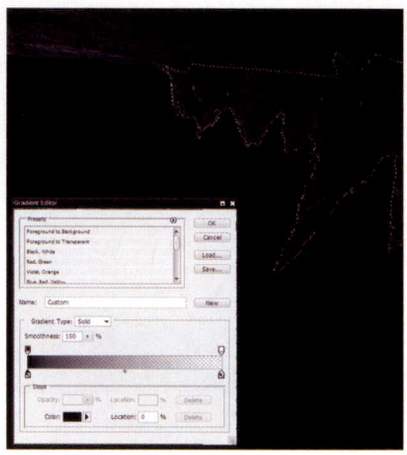


7 Light conditions

It's about time to set the correct lighting for our scene. Duplicate the foreground group added in Step 2, select the copy and press Cmd/Ctrl+E to merge it to one layer. Next, press Ctrl/right-click on the new merged layer to select it. Now you are free to play with adjustment layers and gradients as applied in previous steps.

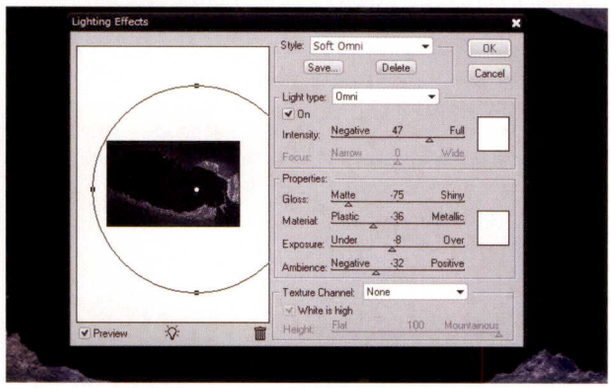
8 Gradient advice

To work effectively with black gradients (G), it's necessary to select the rocks one after another to give them individual shadows. Therefore, it's helpful to place the gradients on their own layers. The closest rocks have to be the darkest, but still with some highlights, getting lighter the further away they are. The Opacity of completely filled areas should be around 90% to keep some details.



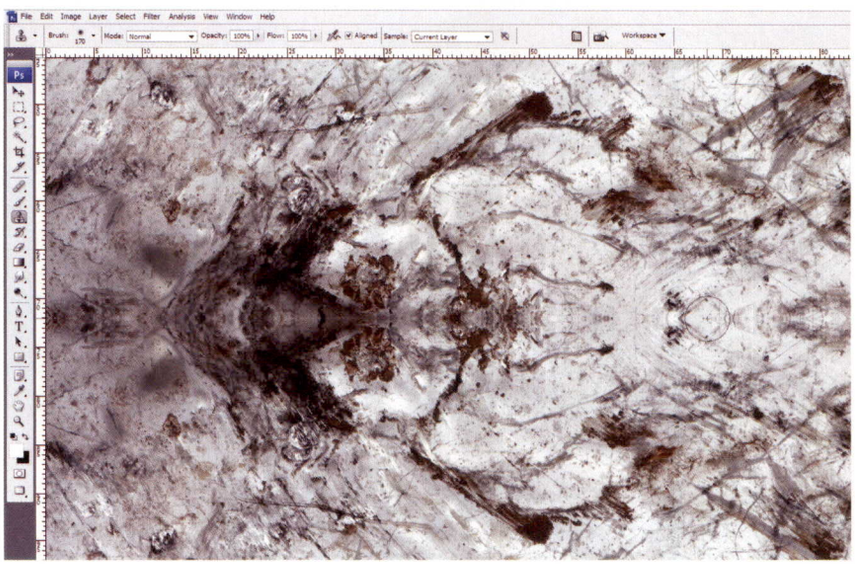
9 Lighting effects

To get the final contrast, create a new layer that is above all the others and press Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Opt/Alt+E. Now we need a render lighting filter called Lighting Effects. Use the settings as shown on the screenshot. Delete out the black space using Selection and Cmd/Ctrl+X, and set the layer to Color Dodge blending mode at 50% Opacity.



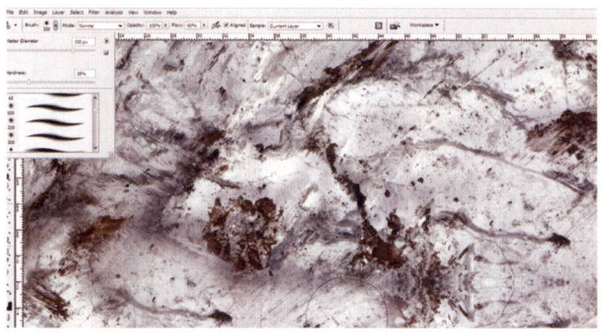
10 The planet

There are lots of different ways to create planets, but the following is Photoshop-only. The first step is to find a fitting texture. Again, www.cgtextures.com should be the place to look for them. We decided to use 'MetalBare0146' from the site (see the link on the CD).



11 More textures

The texture should have a ratio of about 6,000 x 6,000px to ensure good quality. Duplicate the texture and flip it, then use the Clone Stamp (S) and erase similar looking areas.

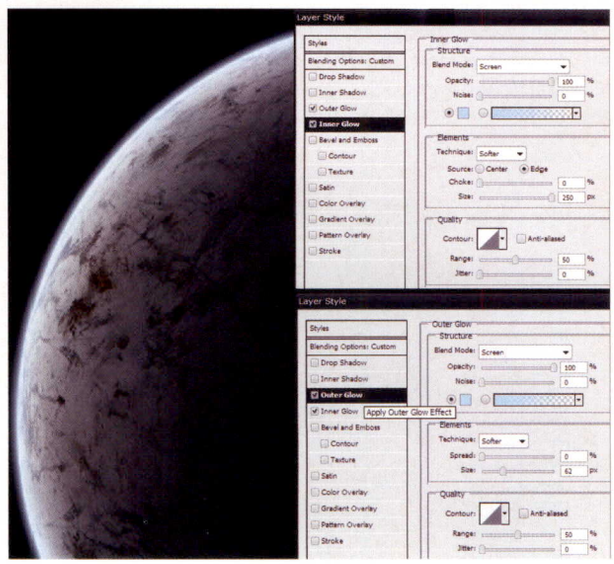


12 Building up the planet

Use the Elliptical Marquee tool (M), press Shift and place a selection. Now copy (Cmd/Ctrl+C) and paste (Cmd/Ctrl+V) it to a new document (Cmd/Ctrl+N). Select the layer again and use the Spherize filter (Filter> Distort>Spherize) at 100% Normal mode twice. Now set up a new layer with a black circle, named 'shadow', of the same size.

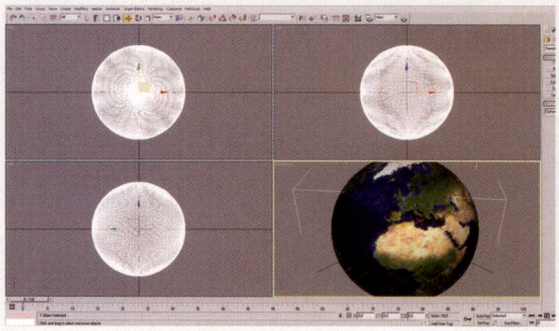
13 Layer masks

Add a layer mask to your shadow layer and use the Gradient tool (G), set to Black to Transparent at 40% Opacity. Delete the places where the light is coming from. Create a new black circle above the shadow layer and change the blending options as shown. Set this layer to Screen. Create a new group for your atmosphere elements.



Getting cool planets

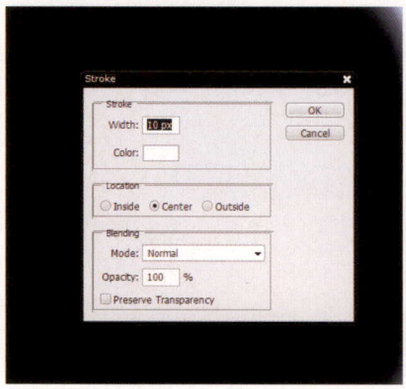
A planet is the centre in most space scenes. Therefore, it is necessary to achieve a lot of quality and detail. Unfortunately, the Spherize filter in Photoshop causes quality-loss, especially on the planets' edges. To avoid that it's useful to work with a 3D program. You only need basic knowledge for this because all you have to do is create a sphere and add the prepared texture. Note that these textures should have a ratio of 2:1. A good place besides cgtextures.com is actually the NASA homepage. There are thousands of high-quality photos that can be used. However, follow this copyright link closely for information: www.nasa.gov/audience/formedia/features/MP_Photo_Guidelines.html.



> A good space background needs a high-quality nebula and well-placed stars. The best way is to paint the nebula, but you can also use some cloud textures

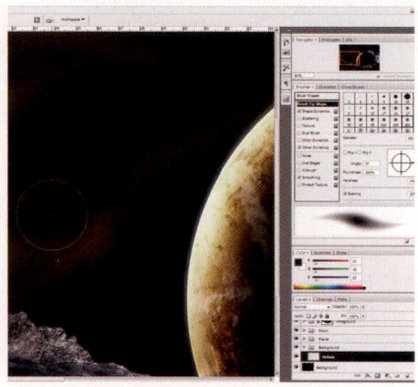
14 Additional effects

Select the base atmosphere layer, create a new layer and apply Edit>Stroke, with Width set at 10px, Color to White, Location at Center. To delete the atmosphere's unnecessary parts, add another mask to the group and use the Gradient tool (G) like before. You can now change the colour etc if you wish, but basically you are finished. We added some further elements to show more possibilities.



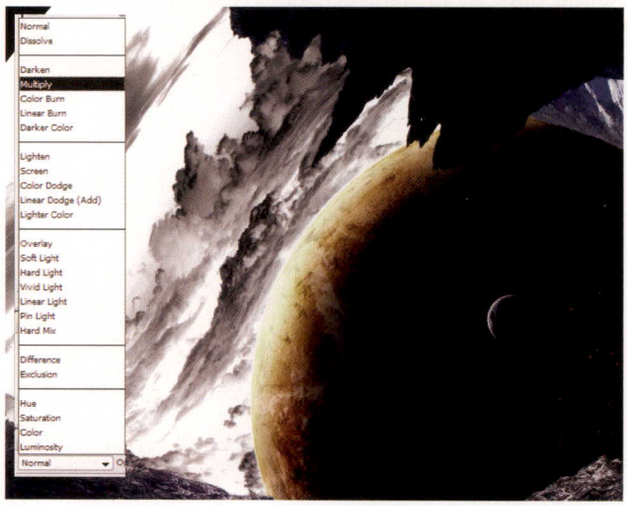
15 Background nebula

A good space background needs a high-quality nebula and well-placed stars for great composition. Basically, the best way is to paint the nebula with a graphics tablet, but you can also use some cloud textures if you prefer. Create a new Background group below the others and add a new layer. Start by painting some rough areas with a large soft brush, as shown in the screenshot.



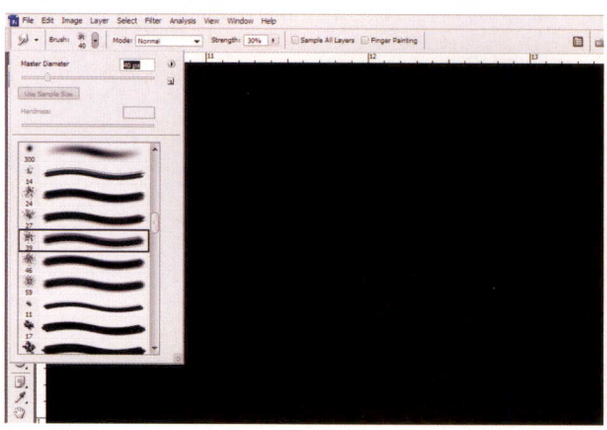
16 Paint effects

A low brush Opacity ensures soft transitions between empty and filled space. To get more details, duplicate the layer, size it down 5%, rotate 180-degrees and Warp it. Now we need a cloud stock for further improvements. Adapt its shape to your nebula behind, delete the colours (Opt/Alt+Shift+Cmd/Ctrl+B), add more contrast and invert the picture. Set the layer to Multiply.



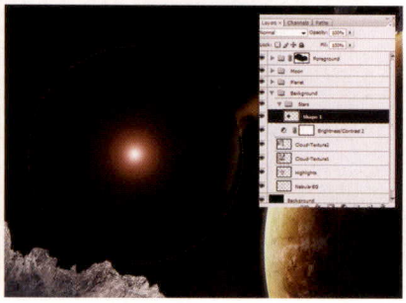
17 Smudge and flare

Use the Smudge tool (R) to edit and modify the texture. Duplicate the layer several times, rotate and transform it. For the highlights, create a black circle, rasterise it and use the Filter>Lens Flare filter. Blur it afterwards. Place the layer below your cloud texture and set it to Linear Dodge. Delete the parts behind the shadow and use the Smudge tool again to modify the light.



18 Stars

Do the same technique on a new layer as mentioned for the highlights in Step 17, but select the layer and apply Radial Blur – with both Spin and Zoom at 100%. Size it down to 15% for larger stars and set the layer to Linear Dodge. Now duplicate this layer over and over again, changing size and colour as you wish.



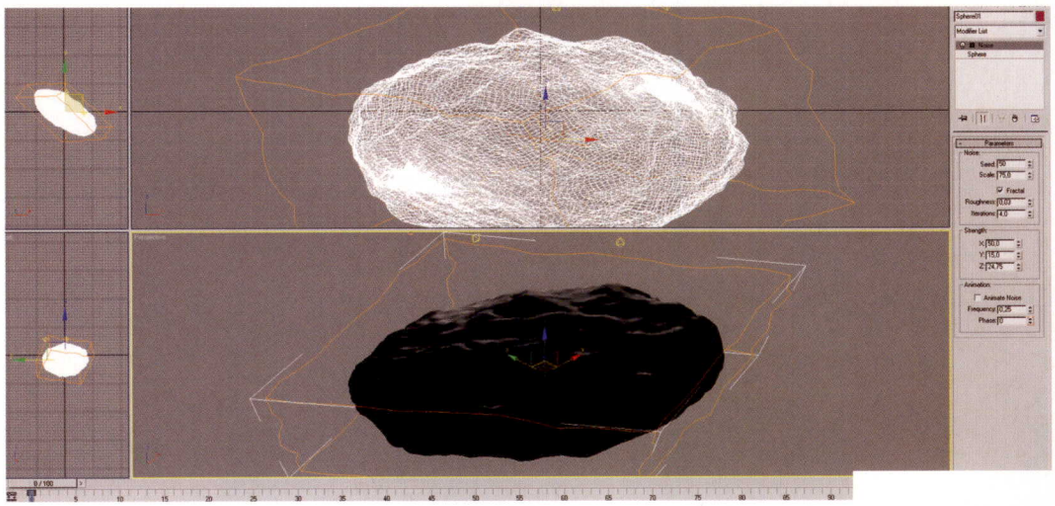
19 Asteroids

Create a new document and load a texture of a stone. Use the Lasso tool (L) to draw and cut a freehand circle selection. Now Warp it like before to get a 3D feeling. Add shadows and light similar to Steps 12 to 14. Unfortunately, this technique is only useful for very small asteroids.

20 Advanced space debris

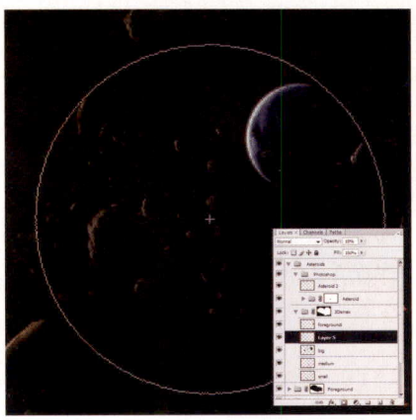
At this point, only 3D software will help if you do not have the required painting skills. Note that asteroids belong to the advanced parts of a space scene. 3ds Max or Cinema 4D are the best choices for this kind of task. A tutorial for 3ds Max written by Chris Di Carlo (aka 'dilekt') shows very simply how to model realistic asteroids: http://dilekt.deviantart.com/art/How-to-Make-Detailed-Asteroids-8068169.

> It's essential that all asteroids have the same light source. The variation in size is also important and you should only have a few larger ones. The farther the objects are, the more distant haze is needed... add a new layer at 10% Opacity and fill with a bright colour



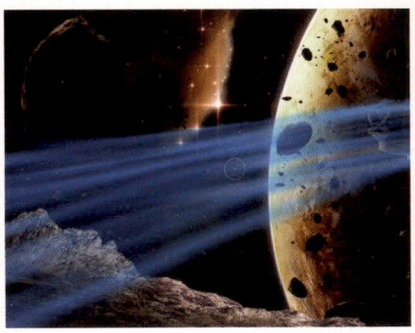
21 Accurate lighting

It's essential that all asteroids have the same light source. The variation in size is also important and you should only have a few larger ones. The farther the objects are, the more distant haze is needed. You can simply add haze by selecting the particular object, add a new layer at 10% Opacity, and fill the selection with a bright colour directed from the light source.



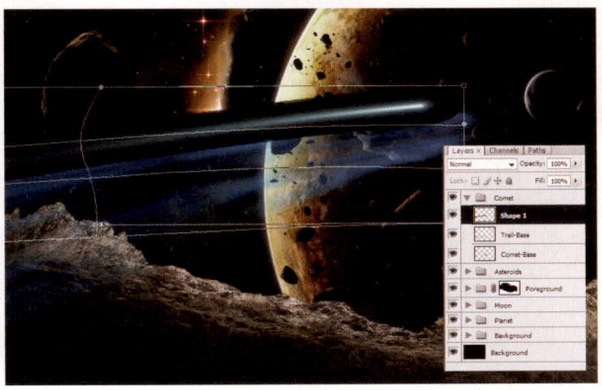
22 Comets

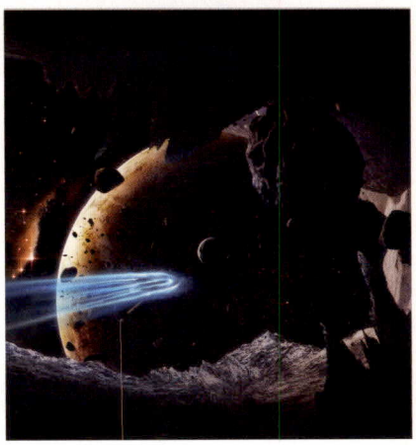
We will take one of our larger asteroids as a comet. Size it down a bit and distort it somewhat. Now take a medium-sized soft brush with a nice contrasting colour – we used '#0090d4' to paint a rough base trail. Work with a low Opacity, using a soft Eraser to delete some parts.



23 Comet highlights

Now we need some highlights. Add a black circle with a Lens Flare and stretch it. Adapt the colour to your trail using Hue/Saturation options, Warp it a bit, and then set the layer to Screen. Repeat this step once or twice and smudge the brighter parts a bit to get some variation.





24 Blur it out

Duplicate the trail-base and use the Gaussian Blur at 80 pixels. Add a layer mask and delete the left side with a black gradient. Now we need to add some light coming from the comet to the surrounding areas. Use a soft brush on a new layer. Opacity should be set to around 3% with a Color blending mode.

25 Final steps

At the end, there are only some final steps like colour adjustments and some detailing you might wish to make to finish your scene. Black gradients or vignette effects help to improve the overall mood and focus of the image. It's also helpful to add final details here and there; in this case it was necessary to add additional textures to the comet, as well as to the asteroids, to create the final scene.

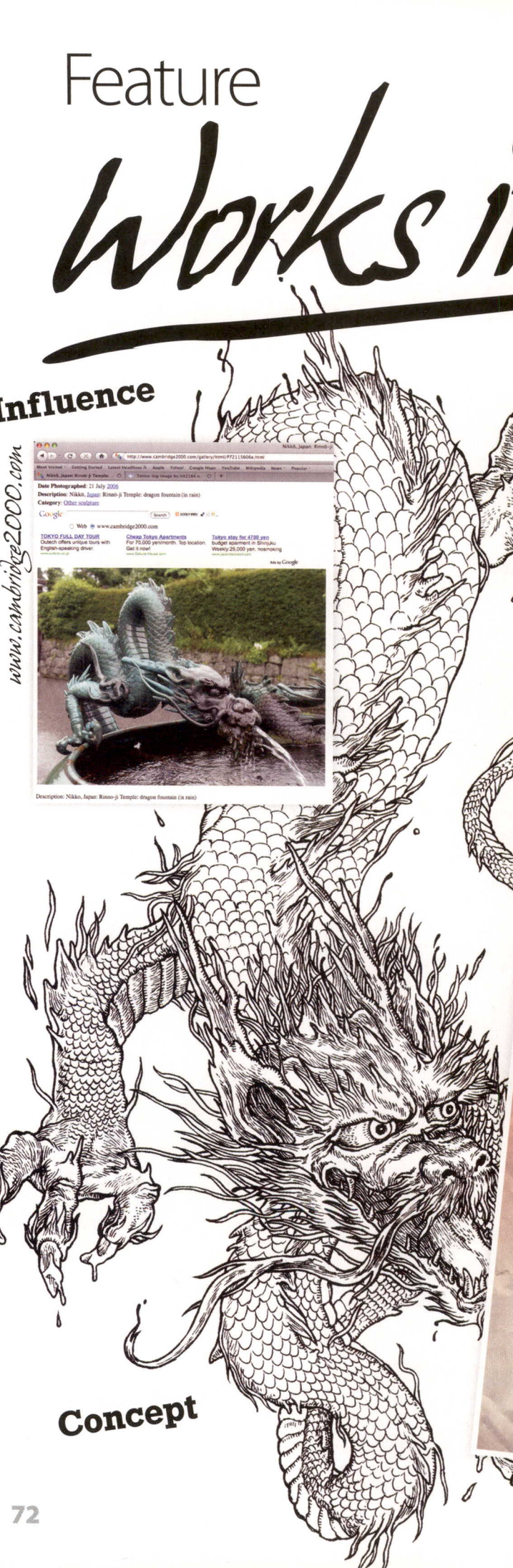
Feature

Works in progress

Ever wondered what makes an artist tick? Where do artists research and discover inspiration? What tools are specific to their workflow, and which techniques are essential to create unifying effects? We have the answers, as we explore the individual methods of four top industry artists, working across a range of styles

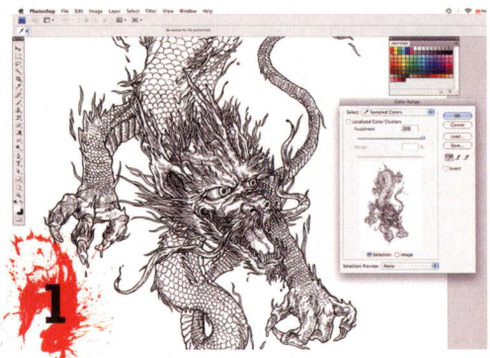
Influence

Concept



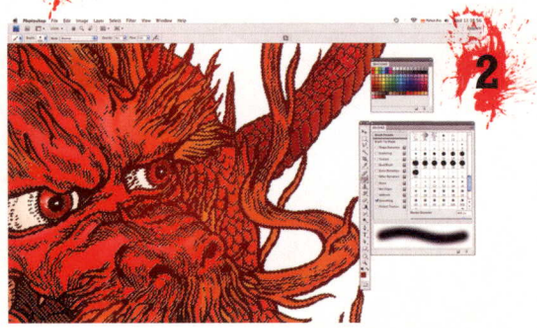
Final image

1: Decisive line work
"Themed online resources like Photobucket.com help me get a sense of what I can sketch in pencil. I then scan and use Levels and brushes to clean line edges, using Color Range to get a crisp copy."



2: Tonality between lines
"I went with red, orange and yellow tones, which are iconic to Chinese culture. I filled a new layer with red underneath, using hard-edged brushes to apply colours to the nails, hair, tongue and eye areas."

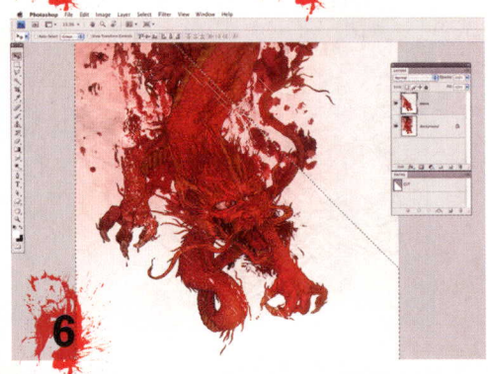
3: Mixed-media elements
"CG Textures (**www.cgtextures.com**) helps to add splatter effects. I experimented with red Hue/Saturation Colorize options and blending modes. I settled on Hard Light, duplicated the layer, switched to Multiply at 20% Opacity and placed it on top."



4: Adjustment layer trials
"I settled on a Hue and Saturation of 0, using a black brush to erase from the torso. On top I stacked a duplicate adjustment Hue/Saturation Colorize layer, edited values and applied an Overlay blending mode."

5: Tangible textures
"I made the colour to a dark red with a Hard Light blending mode. Paper textures were applied with Multiply at 80%, using layer masks to see the visibility of both effects. I duplicated the layer, inverting and setting to Screen at 50%."

6: Cut out and contemporise
"The image looked too traditional, so to give it a contemporary graphical edge I applied slanting lines by making a flattened copy of the image, then applied Pen tool selections to isolate image areas. Creating a new layer from this, I nudged it to the top left a bit, also adding a three-pixel white Inside Stroke."



7: Integrating shapes
"I fancied throwing in some digital objects, so I used the Elliptical Marquee tool to create black circles. I added Color Range black ink textures to some of these then merged the two. I placed my shapes under the stroke-applied layer, and integrated edges by making a selection of the outside of the dragon and erasing from the shape layer."

Project info

Grzegorz Domaradzki

Personal portfolio site:
www.iamgabz.com
Clients: Sony Ericsson, Ubisoft, Schwartau, Wavin

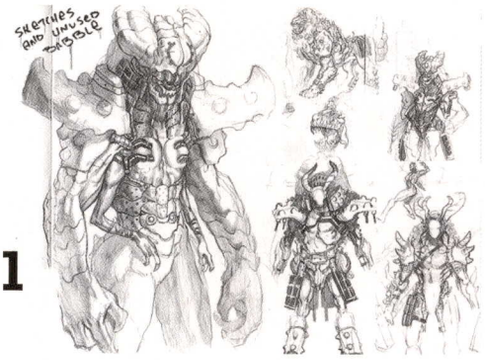
"I have always been a huge fan of Japanese and Chinese art, and especially enjoyed the Yakuza tattoo style, representing tigers, dragons and carp or koi. When I was asked to talk about my work, I spontaneously decided to prepare a homage to these artworks," says Domaradzki.

He started quickly sketching, as always when an idea pops into his head, and later made a precise pen drawing of the main motif, a Chinese dragon. "The drawing itself took me about two and half hours to finish," he explains. "You can find the scanned file on the disc and you can either follow the tutorial steps to create something close to what I did, or let your imagination run wild and create something totally different with the drawing. It's up to you."

His main goal was to create an eye-catching – and at the same time dirtied – image, with the mysterious red dragon emerging from ink and paint splashes on the paper. "I began the digital remastering by colouring the drawing in Photoshop, using plenty of textures, some filters and adding self-made type," he tells us. "In this particular piece I added black circles and some white slanting lines, arranged on the canvas through trial and error. It's really exciting to see that in the end they add a contemporary graphic design edge to the image as a whole."

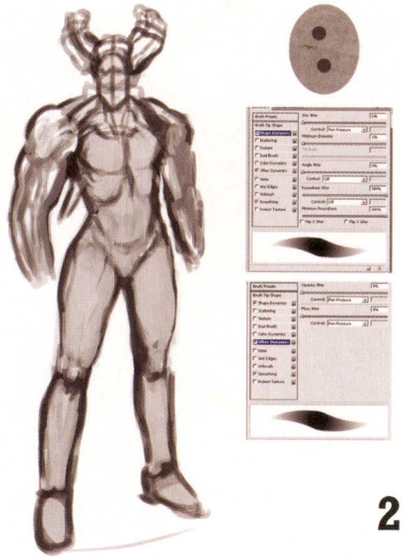
TIP: Multiply blending brushes
Use these sparingly to knock back whole areas into shadow or just a couple of values downwards with a soft-edged low-opacity brush

Concept



1

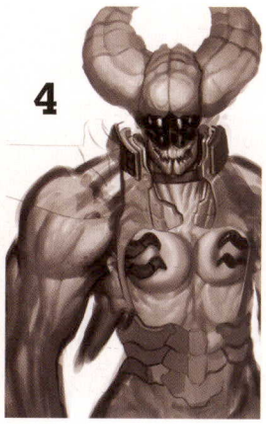
1: The initial sketch
"When I began sketching, I knew that I wanted to make something huge, lumbering, even freakish. Something alien in nature, but still retaining enough humanity to repulse the viewer. This is what I invented after extensive pencil sketches, and I named it *Zyrul the Abomination*. Inspiration was taken from cult classic cinema monsters, such as those in *Predator*, *Species* and *Alien*."



2

2: Lay down the form
"Using my sketch as a general study, I produce form loosely. Sloppy lines are acceptable to determine many anatomical appearances. I use a big brush with an awkwardly oval shape instead of the plain, boring round brush shape to achieve these spontaneous lines and shapes. They open my mind to forms I wouldn't normally think of."

3



4

3: Simple, essential gradient
"Establishing image lighting is probably the most important process in the entire image. I added a layer on top of the image and set it to Multiply, applying this soft round brush to create my own hand-painted gradient. No matter what I add or subtract, I stick to this exposure value throughout, as it keeps me from creating overstated contrasts."

4: Flesh out
"I carefully paint each component at a time, rather than just laying in a bunch of unknown items, fabrics, cloths and gadgets. Trying to actually design the costume or outfit with the same oval shape brush as before is one way to ensure that you keep progressing on a single, streamlined workflow."

5

5: Scrutinise mistakes
"To get a spontaneous mark quality, I often rotate the image on its side and flip it rather than changing brushes. I also work my way from the centre out, using my initial sketch as a blueprint. If I felt a mistake is made, I will paint it onto a separate layer and switch it on and off to see which version I like best."

TIP: Layer masks
Adding a layer of texture and being able to completely mask it then paint it back in subtly offers maximum control over physical effects

Project info

Marco Nelor

Personal portfolio site: www.thurd-eye.com
Clients: Electronic Arts, White Wolf, Microsoft Game Studios, Ensemble Studios, Wizards of the Coast

"I recently finished this piece for the latest Dominance War competition," says Marco Nelor. "The most fun part of the contest for me was getting to design the monstrous fiend."

Many hours went into designing the model sheet and trying to get a design that was cool and inspiring to look at. "After many cups of coffee, this piece emerged," he reveals. "One of the most complicated things about conception is getting everything to read in a way that is modern and cool, while still functional."

Nelor achieved this creative balance through a series of intensive sketch concept sessions and through his experimental brushwork, as he explains: "Everything needs to be there, laid out, and if you are one of those people who doesn't have a solid handle on 3D concepting, painting an image that is very clear is even more important. Getting deep down in there and getting your hands dirty, designing every button and flask, is something that is both refreshing and soothing – just as long as you have good music to inspire you!"

Final image

Killer technique

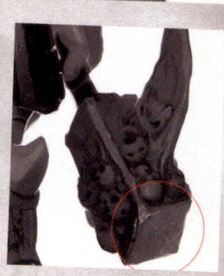
Paint realistic rock textures

Step 1: Refine small highlights

"After laying solid value and using a chiselled, cold, dark stone photo reference, I realised little highlighted areas, with shimmer on the hardest edges. I added very tight edges of light, making the piece seem colder and more dangerous."

Step 2: Add subtle detail

"I lightly added textural information using a speckled brush on a layer over the previous one. The opacity of the brush is low, as a little goes a long way and you don't want to alter the tonal balance too much."



Step 3: Photo reference

"I overlaid a ground texture, using Cmd/Ctrl+ T to transform it, shrinking it and pulling the edges to match the size and shape of the plane. This gives the item interesting history before I paint over it completely."

TIP: Horizontal flips

By going to Edit>Keyboard Shortcuts, you can set a Horizontal Flip hot key. This allows you to see if your image is heavy sided through instant comparison

TIP: Alpha masks
Applying alpha masks assists by speeding up the working process on different sections of the composition

Project info

William Elliot

Personal portfolio site: http://irwit.cgsociety.org/gallery/
Clients: Ford, Lincoln, Land Rover, Volvo, Mazda

The project began as an entry for an online competition with a secret agent theme. "Although I hadn't entered competitions before, this theme alone captured my imagination," explained motivated young artist Elliot. "I played with a number of ideas but I'm a big James Bond fan, so an Aston Martin chase was a must. The main focus of the image would be the car jumping out of the screen." Devised for his portfolio, it meant the final resolution needed to be at 6,000 x 4,000 pixels over 1GB. "This led to some technical issues, really slowing my workflow." This forced him to work on each element separately, before collapsing into a single master file, "This really helped speed-wise and allowed constant revision of original elements when changes were needed."

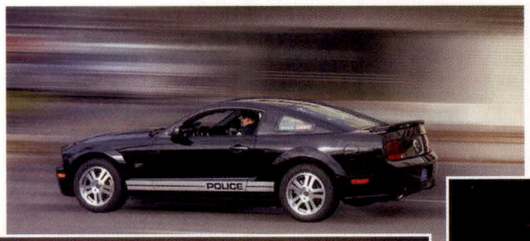
As the piece evolved, it went from a colourful image initially to a much more muted colour palette. This helped the image mature, a lot like the new Bond films where gritty realism is used heavily. "I find the online forums can be invaluable when looking for honest critiquing after producing imagery," he adds.

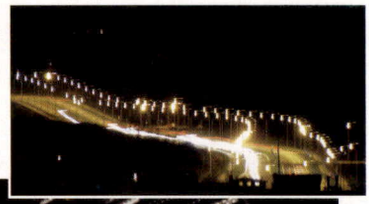
TIP: Lens Flare brushes
These help to produce realistic lens flare effects quickly, using different layer modes to determine lighting strengths

Final image

Concept

1: References
"Research into photographic stock of car chases and city locations was needed. I made a preferred collection and, after reviewing my references, decided a night shot would really bring the car to life, along with the reflections of wet floors. I like how the lights flared in some of these images and I decided a helicopter would be the perfect pursuer."



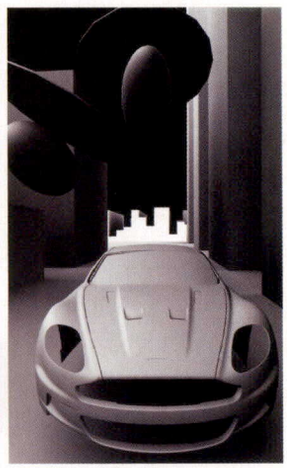


1

TIP: Blending modes
Linear Dodge (Add), Dodge and Screen blending modes help add effects such as reflections, refractions and atmospherics

TIP: Noise – Median
This filter is normally applied in my images, as it helps me create motion-blurred reflection effects to create a sense of realism

2: Layout ideas
"Building basic assets in 3D allows you to experiment with dynamic compositions. I prefer creating this way instead of sketching in 2D, as you can quickly produce and modify very different ideas from just a few simple assets. This allows me to move the camera into different positions instantly and experiment with varying lenses."



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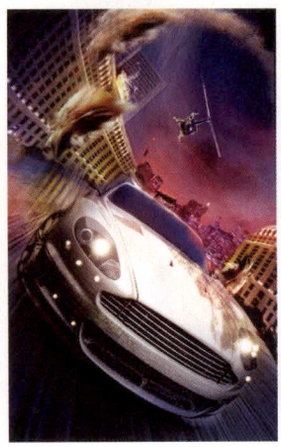
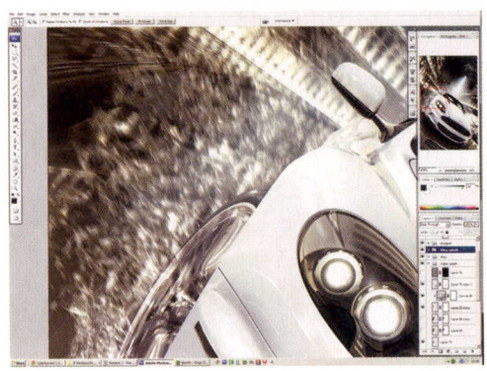


3: Conceptualisation
"After trying out my layouts I settled on one, working it up in Photoshop. This includes adding basic tone, colours, light direction and adding any assets that were not viable in 3D. I used Dodge and Burn to add basic lighting. Objects such as the helicopter and hotel were placed using the Free Transform tool. This image became my guide for creating the final piece."

4

4: Create from individual assets
"I built my assets in 3D and rendered them out in separate layers. This included the buildings and streets to the alpha masks for the helicopter light. Having my assets separate in Photoshop layers with relevant alphas speeds up my application process."

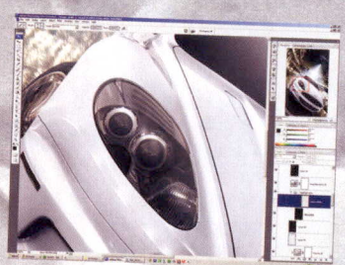
5: Water spray effects
"I decided to add some water spray, as the car needed something to connect it to the road after all. This effect was produced and applied using a mixture of 3D and photo references, all added to the image using Color, Linear Dodge and Screen blending modes."



5

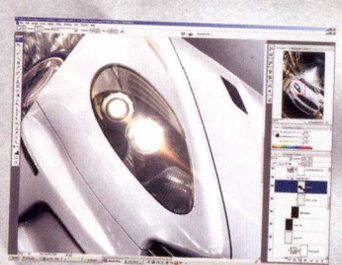
Killer technique

Realistic flares



Step 1: Base layer
"Create a black Dodge blending mode layer above your image layer. Now create another new layer, Opt/Alt-clicking the gap between this and the black layer. This means effects only affect your black Dodge layer."

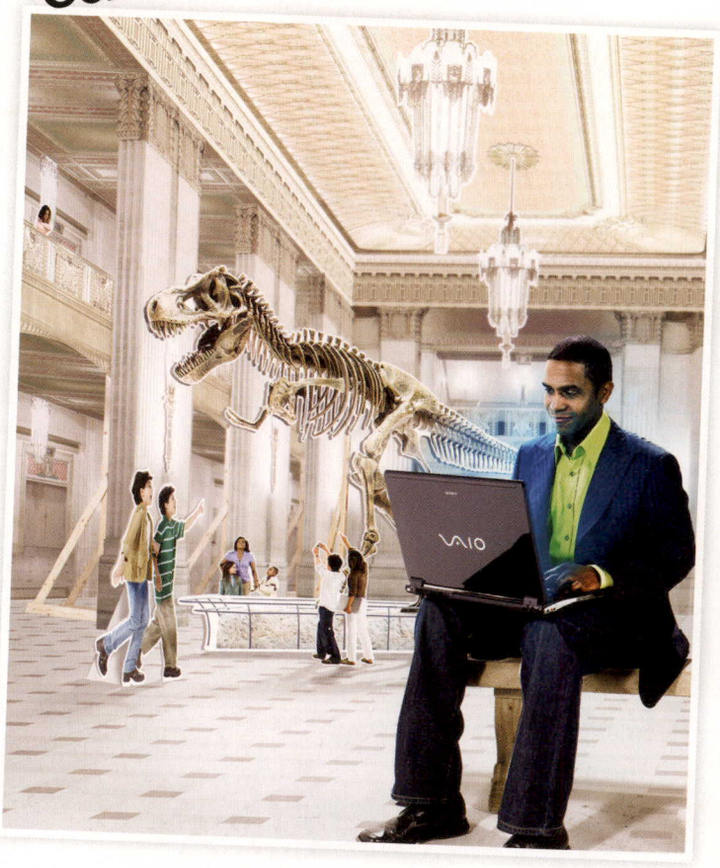
Step 2: Add the glow
"On your new blank layer, use a white soft-edged brush and add your highlight. Use Fade, Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+D, to tone down the highlight if it is too strong."



Step 3: Regulate effects
"Experiment with brushes and layer styles with this effect. When toning down highlights, don't use opacity on your layers. Use Levels to give you that great burned-out highlight effect."

TIP: Color Burn blending mode
To deepen neutral image exposure, apply a solid light brown colour layer set to Color Burn blending mode at 50% Opacity

Concept



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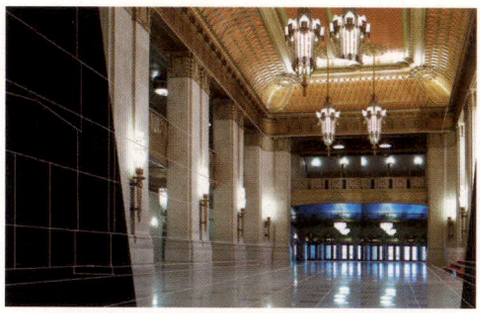
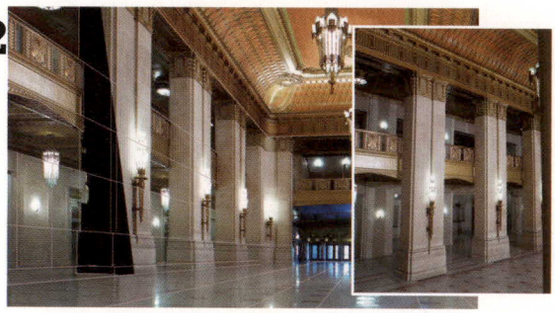


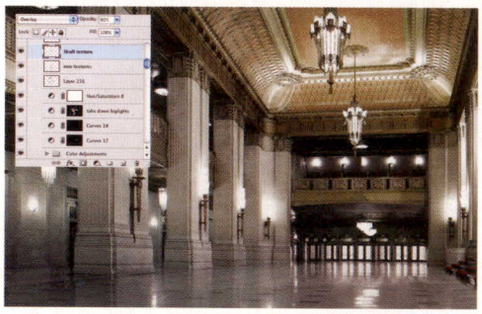
1: Expand the setting
"After we receive concepts from the agency art director, we get to work compositing the image. We resolve base image lens distortion by using the Distort tool, dragging the top handles out horizontally until we vertically aligned all columns. Perspective lines on a new layer, applied by the Line tool, provide a guide when correcting the perspective of the floor tiles."

2



2: Add dimensions
"Cutting and pasting existing image elements, as well as applying and distorting additional photos of the Lyric Opera House, let us match our perspective guides. The balcony was stretched with Free Transform, while the ceiling was patched and chandeliers were moved to the centre, taking a lot of deliberation with applied layer masks."

3



3: Overall colour treatment
"At Filtre we do prefer to simplify the colour palette in produced images. That often means desaturating certain colours, while leaving others at full strength. In this case, I chose to keep a warm, neutral palette by desaturating only the blues and cyans through experimentation with Hue/Saturation adjustment layer colour mode settings."

4

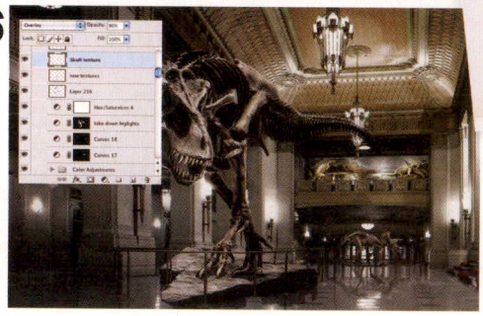
4: Sell it with the details
"Transforming our setting into an archaeological museum wasn't easy. We scoured the web for public domain dinosaur images to piece together the balcony mural. A base for the T-rex was crafted from a photograph of a piece of sandstone shot outside of the studio. Reflections were then added to the floor by flipping Gaussian Blur copies, then using the Liquify tool to selectively distort portions of the reflections."

TIP: Curves adjustment layers
Curve layers add drama. Apply a white Airbrush tool to black-filled layer masks to areas where you want effects applied

5

5: Assemble the pose
"We addressed the original static model by taking 30 angled shots, deliberating then selecting six to assemble our dinosaur in the desired pose. With a base shot of the legs and tail taken facing left, we added shots of the ribcage orientated towards the camera. The skull was applied from a right-facing high-angle shot, creating focus in the composition from a fluid movement."

6



6: Make it real
"Although more diverse, the model image still looked like a model. We combated this by adding a variety of stock sources including some from our own library. We shoot samples with a Canon 5D Mk II, such as concrete, sandstone and dirt. We dramatised lighting by applying curve layers, deepening shadows and brightening highlights on top."

TIP: Overlay blending mode
Various texture images (rock, wood, dirt, etc) can be overlaid at low opacities to create tangibility

Killer technique

Integrating detail

Step 1: Scene placement
"Paste the object into the scene, moving it to overlap a light source or two. At this point the Tyrannosaurus rex looks pretty good, but could use some help to tie it in better to the background."

Step 2: Create glare
"Create a new layer set to the Overlay blending mode. With a white brush set to 0 Hardness, Airbrush activated, apply onto the layer and build up light source glare."

Step 3: Light bloom
"Create a new layer and again, using the Airbrush tool with a soft white brush, apply to the sconces until they bloom over the edge of the dinosaur, achieving the effect of integrating it."

Project info

Filtre Studio

Personal portfolio site: www.filtrestudio.com
Clients: JWT Detroit, Ford Motor Company, Sony, Taylor Swift

This image was produced by the creative team at Filtre Studio as part of a Sony VAIO print advertising campaign. "We work with advertising agencies, design firms and photographers to artistically enhance images, or in some cases create them from scratch," explains Filtre owner Robert Frolich.

"Our original intent was to have photographer Andrew Martin (**www.andrewmartin.com**) shoot the Sue T-rex fossil at the Chicago Field Museum. Since permission could not be obtained in time for our tight deadline, we opted instead to shoot the interior of the Lyric Opera of Chicago for its museum-like qualities," he adds.

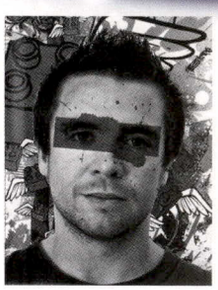
The space itself was quite grand, however, photo stock required heavy editing in postproduction, using additional shots to capture the desired effects.

For the T-rex, Filtre was able to obtain a 72cm museum-quality scale model. "This was quite detailed, however, it did not articulate," reveals Frolich. "The pose was not quite what we needed. Martin patiently photographed 30 different angles, rotating the model every 10-20 degrees." The model was flatly lit in the studio allowing Filtre to enhance shadows and highlights with Curves adjustment layers. It was necessary to pay strict attention to the direction of the lighting coming from the chandeliers above, and from the more diffused lighting of the column sconces. The finished composite was given a moody, shadowy look to enhance the drama of the image.

TIP: Unsharp Mask
An overall Unsharp Mask filter at Amount 50, Radius 2 gives the overall image a visual pop in contrast

Final image

ULTIMAT: *"This premium brand got a simple yet precise design approach, to translate the feel of the brand to its audience"* © Neil Duerden



NEIL DUERDEN

We talk expression, forward thinking and art from the heart with this collage expert

International designer Neil Duerden has been pretty busy over the last couple of years, working on a wide range of different commercial endeavours.

After his first steps into the competitive digital art industry, he set out to illustrate the future and explore the potential of his own contemporary style, "onwards and upwards", as he always says. Duerden explains: "I've completed over a hundred pieces of artwork since May 2008, ranging from the launch of cars through to consumer targeted multi-national campaigns. A huge influence on my work is the desire to push what can be created. Quite often I'll get a call from an agent who simply asks, "Is this possible"? The answer is always yes, and some projects cause the birth of a new style. Some new ideas have to become a little constrained due to corporate brand guidelines, but I have not, nor will I, release an illustration that I'm not happy with to a client."

This attitude towards personal perfection has been with Duerden since his formative creative years. Once graduated from school he worked in various agencies, both large and small, as a graphic designer, which gave him a firm grounding and understanding of how commercial design functions and the importance of high-quality production.

Of his lessons learned, he says: "Perhaps one of the most important things I learnt was that the aim of any organisation's communication is to get the desired message across in the most memorable and efficient way possible. This

> "A huge influence is the desire to push what can be created"

SUPPERCLUB:
"The Supperclub album artwork – a great launch event and I got to meet superstar DJs"
© Neil Duerden

can range from promoting the sales of a product to helping charities trying to save the world." However, a professional attitude was as much as Duerden took from his graphic design experience, and he soon turned his back on this early discipline for a richer, more expressive style. "The defining moment that prompted me to turn my back on graphic design was when an agency started to present more and more ideas that were on the safe side. These would usually keep the client happy but would do nothing for their growth or market placement. I have never looked back since this decision, and it has been a fun ride all the way."

Straight from the heart

This need to express himself and excel shines through in Duerden's controlled yet chaotic approach. Visual detail manifests, creating movement and focus, and is complemented by integrated colour schemes. Duerden reveals eagerly: "My style evolves all the time and now includes most types of complex PSD-based illustration, hand-rendered illustration, complex Illustrator work and photoreal elements. The best way to describe it is messaged maxalism – this is the integration of thousands of elements into an organised and visually pleasing image, which creates the desired effects, hence delivering the client's message directly to the audience."

So where did Duerden's expressive and popular style originate from? Its evolution seems more of a personal exploration than a professional journey.

Interview

> Styles evolve, clients expect more and everything develops

ADIDAS – DREAMING: *"A direct impact image designed to be noticed from a distance. There is no real message in this illustration, except to make the product aspirational and positive"* © Neil Duerden

He explains: "I first started to develop this style for a home-grown website that I never launched. I enjoyed it so much that I spent most of my spare time developing techniques and visual experiments to create a style that is now very commercial and creative. Art is from the heart – if you can carry this into your everyday work then you'll find a new level of creativity that simply flows." He adds: "Another main influence is my father, who taught me all I needed to know about natural media techniques."

Once he established his own artistic approach, amalgamating this with his professional head, Duerden had a successful commercial career – one he can be extremely proud of. Working with international and well-known clients such as Sony Eriksson, Fanta, Honda and Nestlé has helped to build his name. He reveals: "I've worked very hard to get where I am today, and working more than a hundred hours a week is the norm. To meet a client's requirements I have cancelled holidays and often had to work all day and through the night without a break."

This extreme dedication to succeed at what he does, and profit from it, is balanced with keeping a client on board. Duerden has evolved his creative attitude as much as he has his own personal style. Assessing his past attitude towards projects, he now appreciates that keeping clients happy is fundamental. However, he is fortunate enough to still be able to take risks with his commissions – having earned the trust of his clients. "Styles evolve, clients expect more and everything develops," he comments.

Learning curve

Duerden has realised that the commercial world is not a place where you can simply create images that you are happy with personally – it's a business

ADVERTISING NOT WALLPAPER (ABOVE): *"Part of a self-promotion that ran about 12 months ago. This was placed in the right media for the target group and worked a treat"* © Neil Duerden

MUSIC IN THE MIND (LEFT): *"This piece was originally used as a pitch for a major electronics corporation, which has now been licensed for a different use – watch out, you'll see the adaptations soon"* © Neil Duerden

after all. "Sometimes I find I cannot continue to develop a new idea as far as I would like, because there are penalties for not meeting deadlines. I occasionally regret this, but understand that media-space, press and events have all to be scheduled early.

There's also design by committee, where everyone has a different idea of what the image should look like and what message should be conveyed. And I also work for many companies based abroad. This means that some weeks I work for clients who rightly expect you to be available during their office hours… You try that when one client is European, one American and one Australian! Sleep is for the weak, but it's all good fun."

It's clear that Duerden thrives on his busy schedule. But which project got him off on the right foot, ultimately snowballing his career? He reveals: "My first major commission was for Seat. This was a great piece and I really enjoyed working with the brand, as they supplied a perfectly positioned brief. It was a complex mix of illustrative vector elements blended into Photoshop goodness, creating a scene that looked effortless to the eye. The trick was to make it look semi-real, fooling the eye into believing it could be authentic, although obviously it wasn't. They wanted a scene which showed off the personality and advantages of each of the models with a one-hit visual illustration, drawing the consumer into the piece." However, he reflects: "I learnt very little really, because I was already used to working on multifaceted campaigns across all media."

Astonishingly, having completed more than one hundred projects, Duerden still recalls his personal favourite. He explains: "One of the most fun projects I ever worked on was the Supperclub album cover, which was also only a small job in the grand scheme of things. This involved going to loads of launch parties at their Amsterdam club to get a feel of the place. The whole venue is designed to give the visitor a fantastic sensory overload. They gave me complete creative freedom, and the brief was simple – 'beauty', that was it."

Talk about creative freedom! The outcome was far from simple and included over seven thousand layers working in perfect harmony. "This was also sold as a limited edition piece through the chain of clubs, and the launch was amazing. Women dressed similar to the artwork, and the whole club was decorated with vines and flowers to match the piece and create a perfect synergy between the artwork and club for the evening."

SONY VAIO (ABOVE): *"A piece used for the launch of Sony's latest laptop. The corporate guidelines had to be followed while still maintaining maximum impact. This file is over four metres wide in reality at high resolution"*
© Neil Duerden

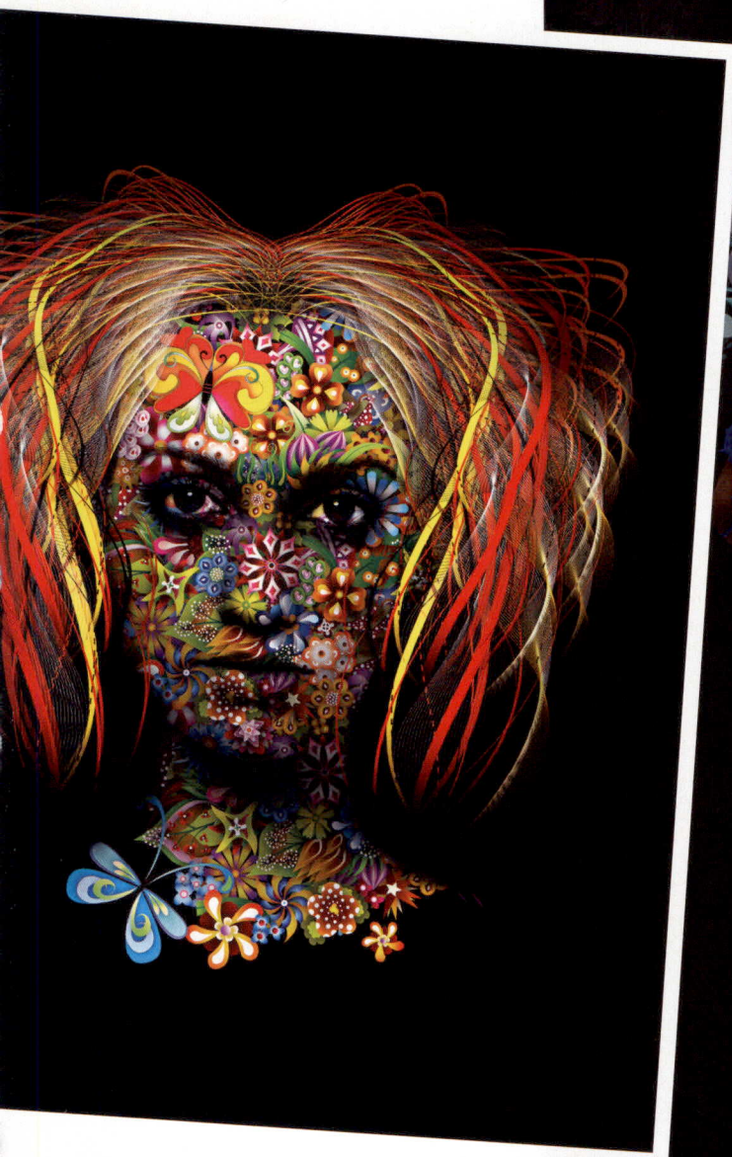
Cool, calm & composed

Duerden frequently points out the necessity of layer functionality in his design. Without it his creative voice would never be heard, and he is quick to endorse the use of Photoshop to create his own entertaining style: "it's the most powerful tool for image making around. Even these days, after working virtually every waking hour and day within the program, I still discover something new. For every problem or look there is a solution – the hard part is not getting carried away and making it appear to be just a Photoshopped file. Instead, you have to try and create art.

"Here are a few of my tips on using Photoshop. First, always stay away from filters, because these will simply give your work the look of Photoshop, as opposed to something special. Second, always think about what you are doing and the purpose or message; never do something just for its own sake. And finally, always manage your layers – and just enjoy yourself!"

This last point certainly rings true with Duerden, as he derives so much pleasure and enjoyment from his method of design. He experiments with everything, never sticking to any one method to achieve his goals: "I've used images scratched into sand and photographed, ripped paper, paper glued to paper to make a face and then scanned, 3D software, Painter and everything else I can think of. But all these elements end up in Photoshop, and that's where the real magic happens."

An excitable attitude towards all things is balanced by a cool, composed outlook towards commercial demand – both attributes help Duerden tackle his hectic schedule, which might well break a lesser designer. He explains: "I'm a very laid back person and luckily stress doesn't affect me. I can work effectively on numerous projects simultaneously without getting fazed, and still keep the quality and professionalism up. In fact, I love it when there are numerous projects on the go, and quite often I have a few jobs open at the same time, flicking between them as the inspiration for each flows. Some people believe



FLORA, CLICK FOR ART (ABOVE): *"A self-initiated playful project for ClickForArt's print sales. It was designed to see how this style could develop"* © Neil Duerden

URBAN MERMAID (RIGHT): *"This is the winning entry for Getty's image competition. This file was just simply fun"* © Neil Duerden

that this process means the projects will become unfocused and merge. Trust me, they don't – it simply allows me to work organically."

So what advice does Duerden offer to artists looking to achieve such enthusiasm in their own artwork? "Enjoy what you do. In my experience this will mean that the correct creative solution is usually the one you come up with first. Also, don't use simple Photoshop effects just to jazz up an image. Only use effects that suit your purpose, and apply these where needed. It's all about the thought process and the composition."

www.neilduerden.co.uk

Michal Sycz

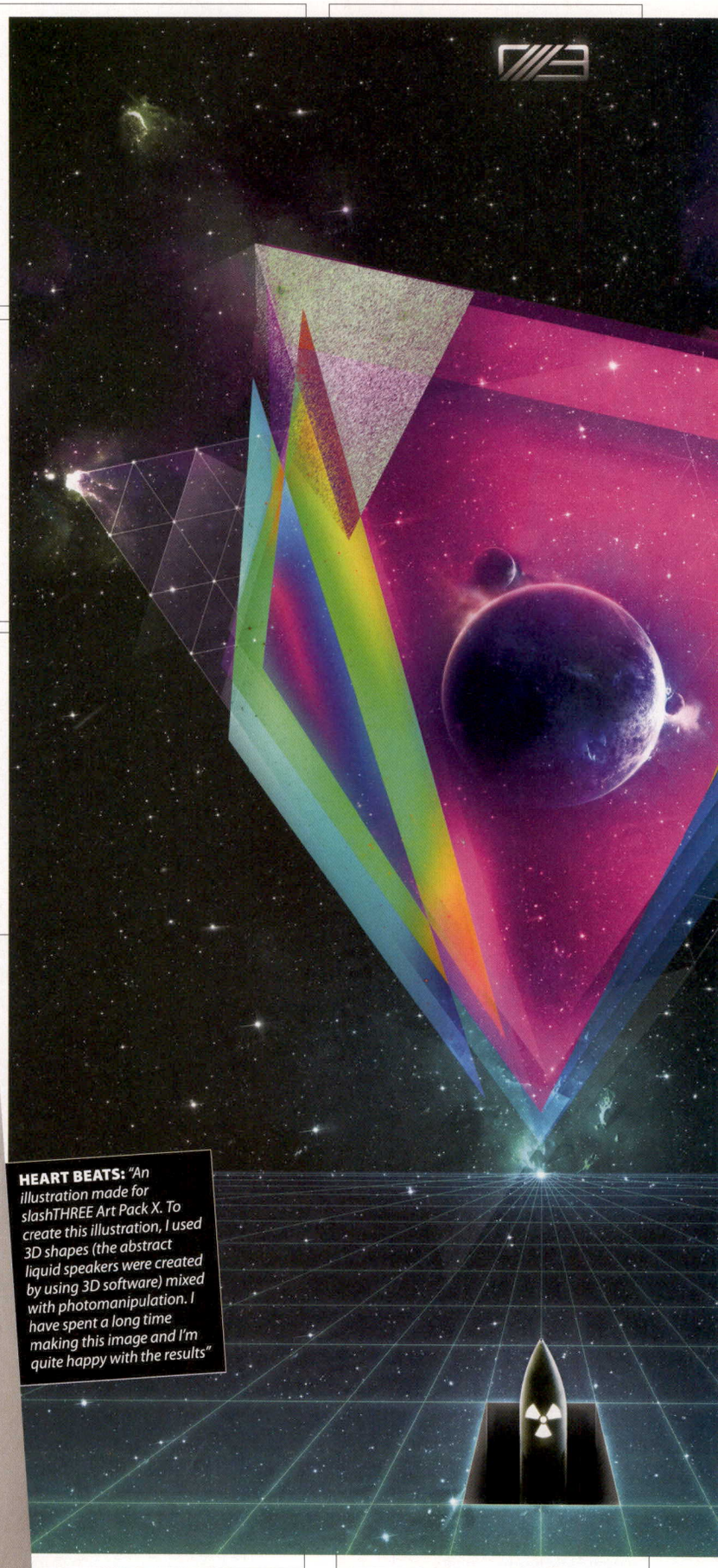
Website: www.noeeko.com
Clients: Factory 311

Michal Sycz, aka Noeeko, is a freelance digital artist based in Cracow, Poland, specialising in illustration, web design, branding and interactive media. From humble roots designing a poster for a local punk band five years ago, Sycz has completed a high-profile project with Factory 311, working on a photo by Lionel Deluy (find out more at **http://dsevo.com/**).

Sycz is self-taught, but he has always had artistic passions, as he explains: "I have always loved drawing and sketching objects around me, but one day someone gave me a copy of Adobe Photoshop and I realised this was what I really wanted to do. I started creating digital images just for fun, but it became a big fascination and finally a profession."

Looking to the future, Sycz hopes to one day open a studio, but for now he is concentrating on improving his techniques and focusing more on interactive media and experimentation. His personal technique involves use a mix of 3D shapes, photomanipulation and 2D Illustrator shapes. "I usually start by doing a quick low-resolution sketch," he says. "When an idea comes into my mind, the first step is to search for photos, the next is to make some 3D renders and the last is to apply some Photoshop tricks."

This results in his personal style, which Sycz describes as varied: "I try out different styles instead of mastering a specific one. There are a lot of reasons why I'm trying to use different styles and applications. It's quite important when you work for clients or agencies to show that you're flexible and could solve a graphical problem in more than one way and use a lot of different tricks."



HEART BEATS: *"An illustration made for slashTHREE Art Pack X. To create this illustration, I used 3D shapes (the abstract liquid speakers were created by using 3D software) mixed with photomanipulation. I have spent a long time making this image and I'm quite happy with the results"*

NUCLEAR WAR: *"Another work created for slashTHREE. The theme was 'Order vs Chaos'. We were allowed to focus on one of the two, so I chose chaos. This illustration is one of my experimental/freestyle works"*

WAR BRINGS CHAOS: *"The main idea is simple – war brings chaos. This illustration was my manifestation against the war. The hand is a symbol of oil and human greed, while the grenade is a symbol of war. It was supposed to only be experimental typography work, but it turned into an illustration with many layers and details"*

Calvin Ho

Website: www.atomicattack.com
Clients: Sony, Levi, HKYFCD, Cartier

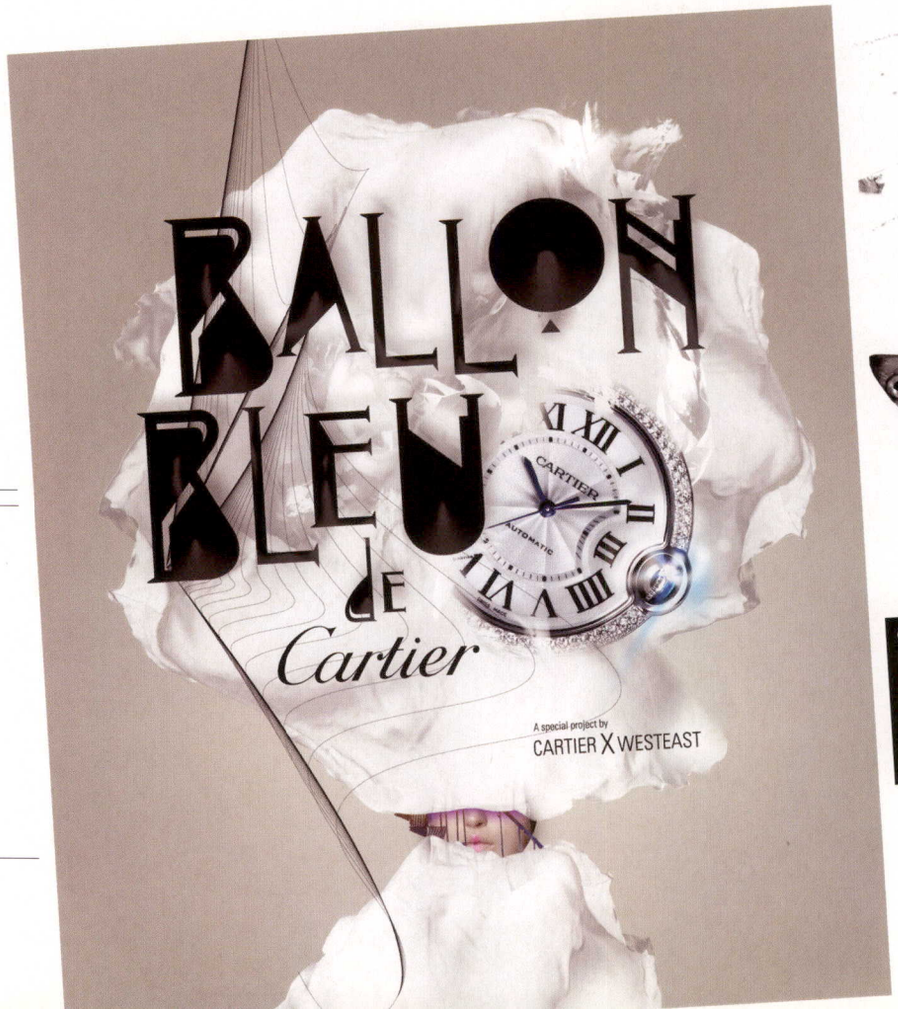
Calvin Ho made the leap to freelance back in 1992. With the world in global recession he relocated to Hong Kong, the place of his birth, to discover his Eastern origins and began his commercial adventure.

"I started with retouching projects in Photoshop, adding more highlights to photos and expanded these into something far more surreal than what the photographer had imagined," he explains. It wasn't long before clients clambered for his services. "I started working for retail department store Lane Crawford. This was work that really sparked my inner creativity. I started producing collage pieces in an early version of Photoshop."

His introduction to our favourite app was arduous and initiated his meticulous preproduction process, which he still abides by today, as he says: "It was so hard to work on computers back then, as they didn't really support files with too many layers. I remember three to four layers needed external SCSI hard drives to hold the virtual data. Saving a file took 20 to 30 minutes. This, in effect, prompted me to specifically visualise an image in my mind before application even began."

Ho presents a clearly distinct style, however, his application process is far more spontaneous, treating Photoshop much like applying paint liberally to canvas. "The sum of the parts doesn't always necessarily equal what you see in the final picture," he reveals. "My designs are made out of borrowed stock from anywhere and everywhere. My friends who are familiar with my work call me a garbage collector," he chuckles.

The only difference is that Ho mends what he borrows, "to the point where it becomes recognisably my style, and it's hard to see how I obtained the source images and created something totally different. It's even hard to put it down as a tutorial at times. This is much like asking a painter how he specifically applied to an abstract design."



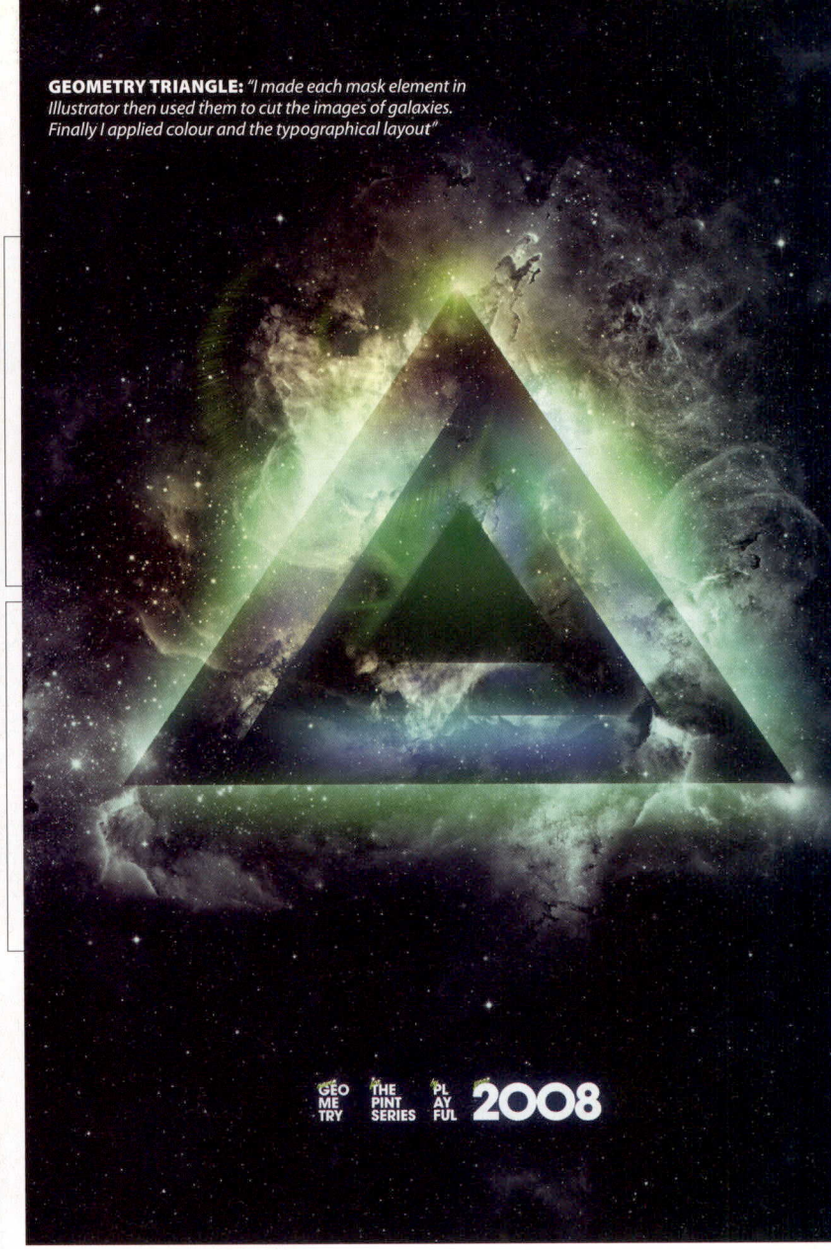
CARTIER X WESTEAST MAG (FR & HK): *"I was commissioned with an open brief. The only limitation was to keep the watch predominantly blue, since its selling point was the Ballon Bleu or Blue Balloon"*

HINT MAGAZINE: *"A fashion site in New York commissioned me to conceptualise an animated fashion story. I remixed the photos into this wild-moving, spontaneous, cinematic, surrealistic piece"*

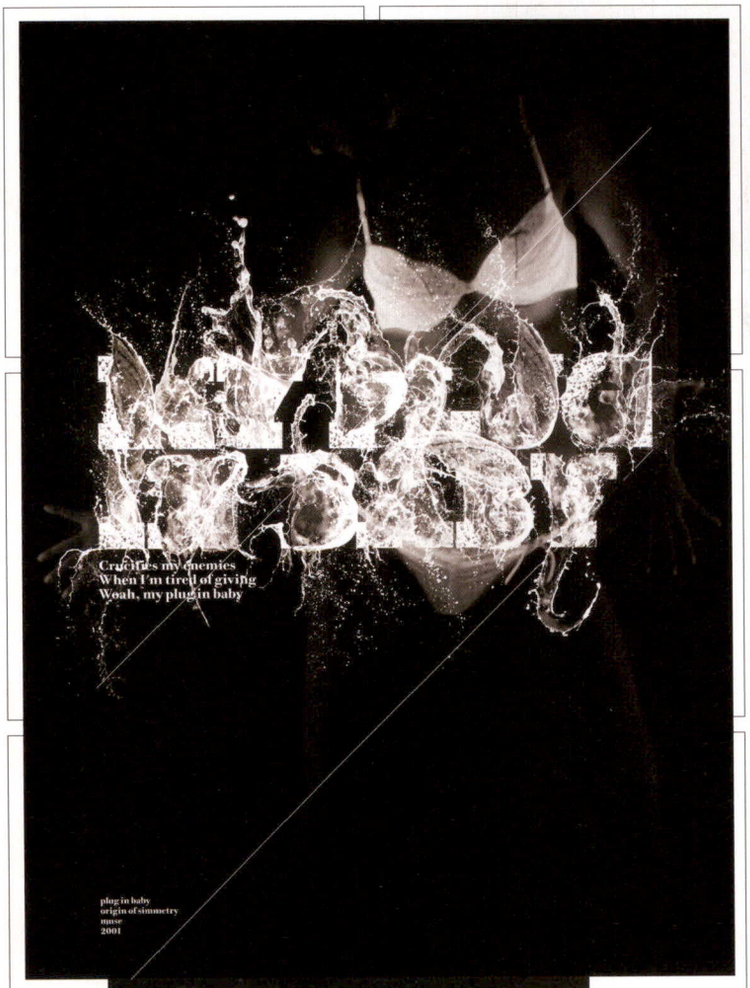
ATOMIC ATTACK BUSINESS CARDS: *"There was no real need for sketches, as these were abstract pieces. I experimented in Photoshop until the designs evolved"*

CHILDREN OF THE IDIOM: *"I used greyscale and Screen mode to generate the nebulas, then applied colour to each layer with Hue/Saturation. Finally, I added the flares at 45 degrees, made with three or four lines of different values of stroke and a Motion Blur"*

SUPERNATURALISM: *"I used spots made with watercolours to mask the image of the skull. Then I applied a Glowing Edges filter in greyscale to give the sensation of a hand-drawn picture. Finally I used some forms done in CINEMA 4D and applied colour"*



GEOMETRY TRIANGLE: *"I made each mask element in Illustrator then used them to cut the images of galaxies. Finally I applied colour and the typographical layout"*



MY PLUG IN BABY: *"I used Water Splash brushes to re-create the typographical layout that I used as a base in Illustrator. Behind the type, I applied another photo of my lovely model"*

Pablo Alfieri

Website: www.pabloalfieri.com
Clients: Victionary, Index Book, MTV, Beautiful Decay, Pank Films

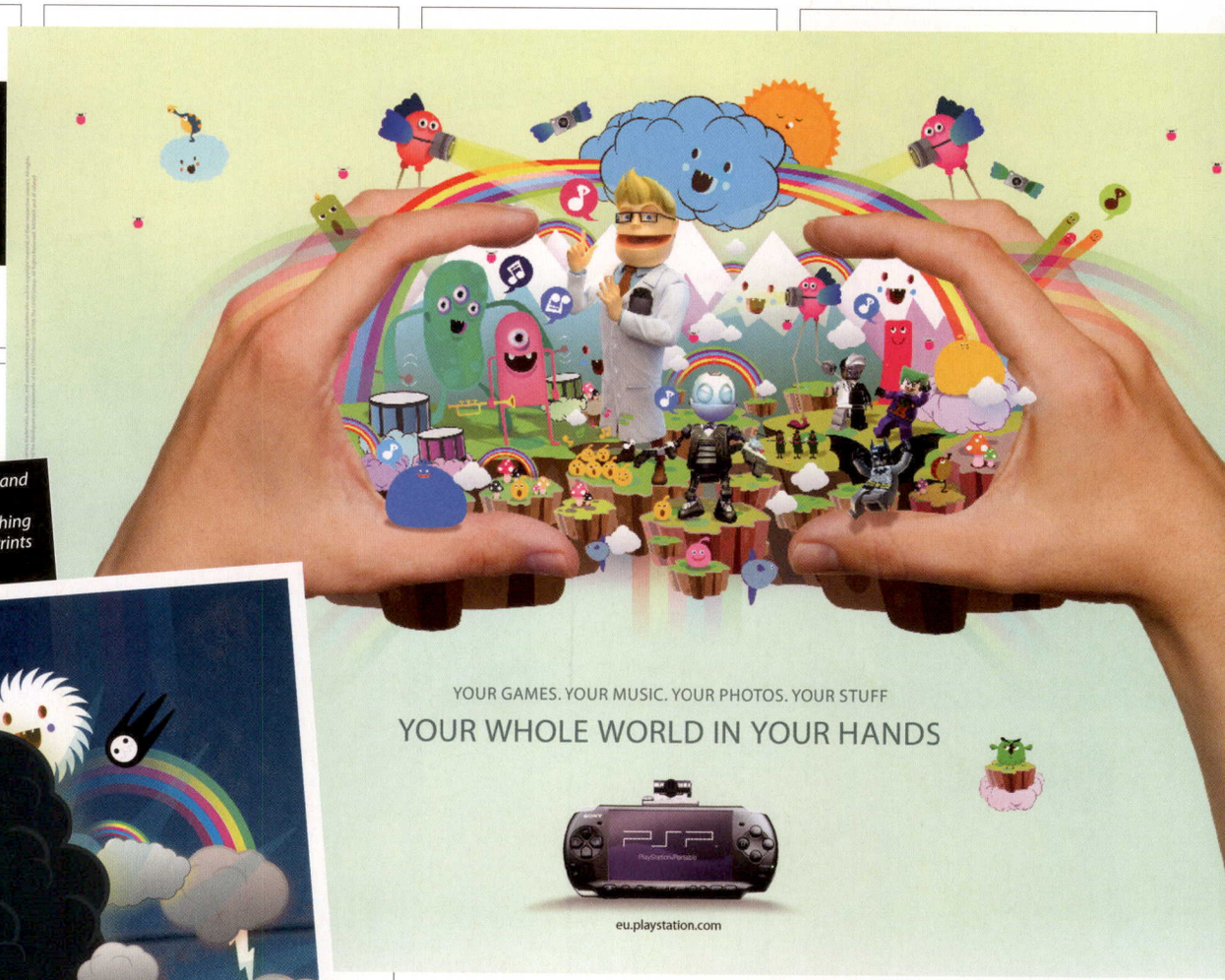
Pablo Alfieri has an electric style – literally. Techno and electro neon tones emit from his portfolio, giving it an intense and dynamic feel. From typography through to photography, he has produced work for contemporary clients such as MTV and Beautiful Decay.

His visual approach takes on a lucid dream-like state. He tells us: "I've always liked to develop oneiric images and Photoshop was my first attempt to make 'third type' contact. Now I can finally show the world what exists inside my head. Lately I've integrated 3D programs and Illustrator. Photoshop is applied in the middle of the process, up to the end, to ensure a professional finish."

However, he tries to avoid any sort of style throughout his portfolio, rather seeing his work as a personal and creative exploration. He explains: "It's a place to develop myself as a designer – to experiment, to be surprised and to get passionate about each of the works that I do." For the same reasoning, he doesn't think he could even define his studio, Playful: "I've always been quite against those who are in the habit of stagnating in a style."

His attention to commercial yet expressive effects has seen his work shine on national and global platforms, as he admits: "I have been lucky enough to have my projects posted on some of the most important design portals such as CPlab, Fubiz, Ventilate and Behance. But the most significant event is the imminent merger between Playful and Gula (**www.holagula.tv**), which will become one of Argentina's most important studios in motion graphics and design."

PSP 3000: *"This was part of a TV and print campaign for the release of the Sony PlayStation PSP 3000. This poster was designed with younger gamers in mind"*



THE CLOUD'S REVENGE: *"Vector and hand drawn illustration. The clouds take their revenge on planet earth, destroying everything in their path and bringing a new ice age" Prints are available of this image online*

Jonathan Ball

Website: www.pokedstudio.com
Clients: FHM, PlayStation, BBC Sport

Jonathan Ball is an artist with an undoubted passion for digital design. However, with PlayStation and the BBC already on his client list, you may be surprised to discover that Ball has really just begun his creative career, as he explains: "I always liked drawing, but it wasn't until I studied graphic design at the age of 29 that I realised it was illustration that was my main passion in life. So I have only been working as one for around four years."

Within this time, Ball has nurtured a playful yet provocative graphic style. "I love a good contrast between dark and light elements, colour and darkness," he says. "The same goes for the themes used. Things can be cute and cuddly but also have a darker side."

Photoshop has become a valuable creative asset in his design production. "One of my favourite techniques is making various vectors elements and then bringing them into Photoshop to layer into an image. I use Photoshop's tools to create interesting effects and layer styles. I often add various scanned textures to roughen the vector look."

Ball has been such a big commercial success due to the enthusiasm he shows with every project. No brief seems too big and he is always ambitious to succeed, as he reveals: "Currently, I'm creating hundreds of creatures for a massive online monster-fighting game. I've been working on that on and off for almost a year. I would love to expand into more motion and animation design, and also expand the studio, as there's often an overload of work. This will enable Pokedstudio to take on larger projects in the future."

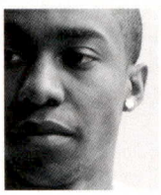
THE CALLING: *"The mains elements are 3D renders. All the other parts are added around like a collage in Photoshop. Quite a few texture are mixed in, too"*

RED LADY – CHANEL: *"Studio Blup was invited to pitch for the 2011 Chanel campaign. I wanted to create a sense of impact only using a limited colour palette. The brief was to keep a fresh classic feel and use my style of remixing abstracted imagery..." Photography by Martin Margiela*

WHITE TRASH RECORDS: *"Art directed by Louis Lawerance, this was a fun brief to work on for Junk. They gave us total freedom to create a dirty and rustic vibe for the White Trash European record label"*

E4 IDENT: *"Invited by E4 to create an animated ident, I highlighted what E4 is about and showed it through different images from comedy through to classics"*

Jonathan Wilkins aka Dines



Website: www.iamdines.com
Clients: Pepsi, Nike UK, MTV

Jonathan Wilkins, aka Dines, is always on the go when it comes to different projects, so we caught up with him to find out more.

Now firmly in the 'established' bracket of artist, his work has evolved into a unique blend of remixed shapes and abstract formations, with a sprinkle of UK urban flavouring. "I like to create a sense of movement in my pieces, which allows the viewer to almost imagine it in motion," he explains.

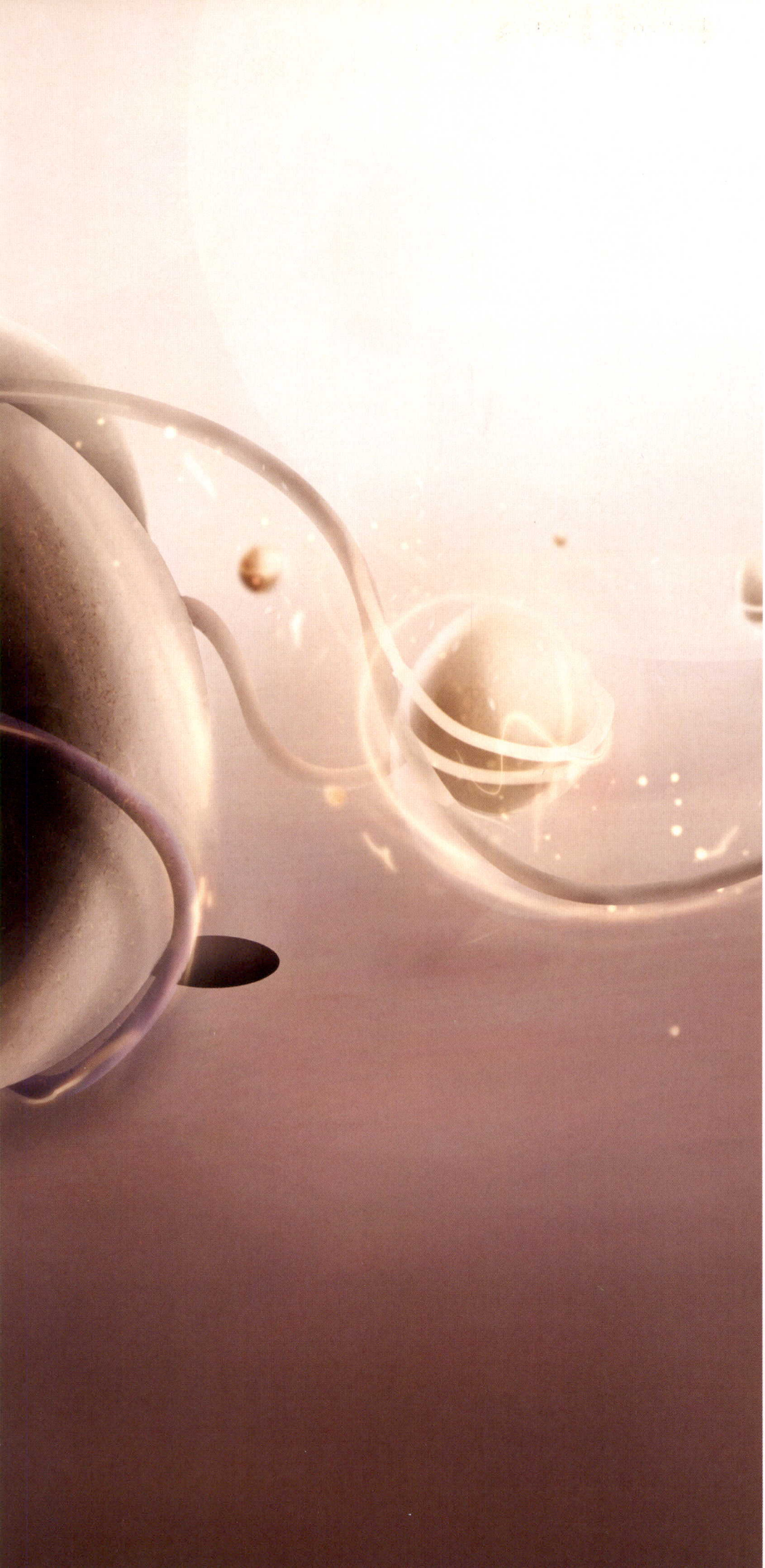
Photoshop still plays a huge part in his production, as he reveals: "I often use Overlay and Multiply blending settings, applying a rustic or contemporary vibe. I have about three different ways of cutting out stock images. The technique I prefer to use is the Polygonal Lasso tool. Weirdly enough, I find it very therapeutic sitting there tapping on my graphics tablet. Using the Blur filters, specifically Motion Blur, adds another dimension to my art, and this gives me some amazing depth of field and motion results."

The last year has seen larger commercial strides for Wilkins, with work recently appearing for MTV and Nike UK. He adds: "I've been featured on a lot of blogs and websites – Behance, artskillz and deviantART.com. I've also been working closely with Junk (**www.junkclub.com**) to produce some lovely designs for apparel, released this summer. My baby, Studio Blup (**www.studioblup.com**), has been invited to pitch for some exciting new briefs, set to be announced very soon. We have also lined up some amazing gallery space in Amsterdam and are really looking to push that as far as we can."

Tutorial

ABSTRACT DESIGNS

Use Photoshop to build abstract creations with a 3D look



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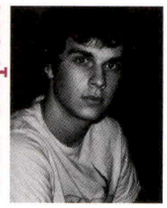


Richard Roberts
www.theotherstream.com

Richard is a freelance illustrator based in Milwaukee, USA, with six years' experience. His style is a mix of digital painting and photomanipulation. He started his online portfolio two years ago.

Source files

Included on the CD is the Photoshop file for the tutorial artwork. The file demonstrates how the piece was created, layer by layer.

Abstract art is an increasingly popular genre within the field of digital design. Whether it's for posters, desktop wallpapers or just for fun, love it or loathe it this style isn't going away any time soon.

This tutorial looks in depth at how Photoshop can be used to create abstract shapes and compositions. It is intended for people who have an intermediate knowledge of the Adobe multimedia app and ideally some experience of digital painting. You will learn how to create an abstract illustration with an intricate flow and also how to apply colour, proper shading and lighting techniques – all within Photoshop.

The inspiration for this piece came from previous abstract works, but applies a modern twist by bringing digital painting into the mix. Surrealist artist Salvador Dali is always a huge inspiration, and you will definitely be able to see that his style had some influence here. Photoshop is such a versatile program, which enables you to translate the most abstract art visions in your mind to the screen; few other programs can offer this degree of control and flexibility.

The tutorial is completed using only Photoshop-generated forms, which means you don't need any stock imagery to get started. So let's get abstract!

> Photoshop is such a versatile program, which enables you to translate the most abstract art visions in your mind to the screen; few other programs can offer this degree of control

Quick tip

Digital painting is what this tutorial is all about, so owning a graphics tablet will make it much, much easier. To learn more about how to paint and hone your skills, visit http://browse.deviantart.com/resources/. The site is packed with tons of tutorials and tips on digital painting to help get you started or refresh your skills if they're a bit rusty.

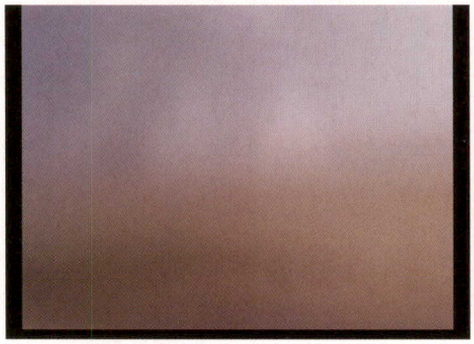
Tutorial

Quick tip

Successful digital painting is something that comes with experience and practice. Don't expect amazing results on your first try. Just keep practising and you will improve with each project. If you are not sure how an object is lit to create that 3D feel, just look up a reference online.

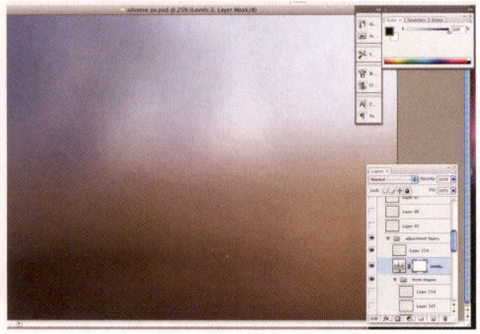
01 Set your background

The first step is to establish your background. Choose two colours that you want to use as the base for your background and throughout as a theme. We suggest you pick neutral colours, one dark and one light. We have chosen a light purple and darker brown. The reason for using neutral colours is to ensure that your shape and light effects remain the central focus.



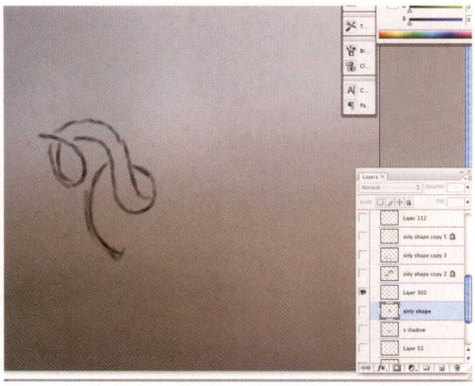
02 Source the main lighting

Before we start laying down any shapes, we need to think about the layout of the lighting. In this piece, we decide to have the main light source on the right-hand side. Take a large soft round brush, around 300px, and brush white over the area you want the light source and switch to Overlay mode. Next, do a Levels adjustment, darkening the image to boost contrast.



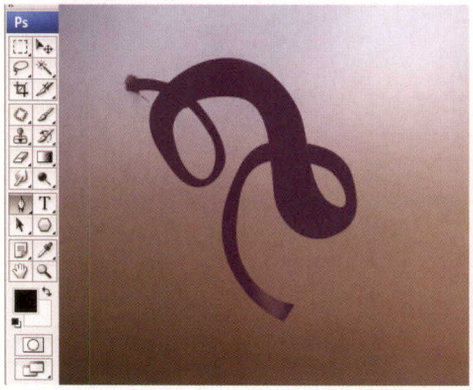
03 Pre-sketch the composition

Our next step is to begin forming our shapes. All of our shapes will be digitally painted, so having a tablet really helps here. Create a new layer and select your hard round default brush, size 40px, then go into Shape Dynamics and put both settings to Pen Pressure. Start sketching a shape, only applying light pressure on your pen. Doing this pre-sketch is essential, as planning ahead will result in a better illustration. Keep experimenting with direction and form until you get something you like that has a nice flow.



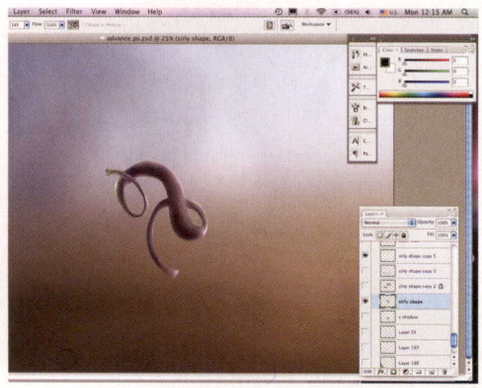
04 Outline the sketch

Now that we have a basic sketch of our shape, we can start to bring it to life. Get your Pen tool, making sure it is on the Paths option, and outline the sketch you did, but this time very neatly. Once you have the outline, Ctrl/right-click inside the shape and choose Fill Path. Choose the colour you want for the base of your shape. Next, in your Layers panel, click the chequered box where it says 'Lock' – this will lock the shape so all brushing you do stays inside the shape you just created. At this point, you can get rid of the sketch layer.



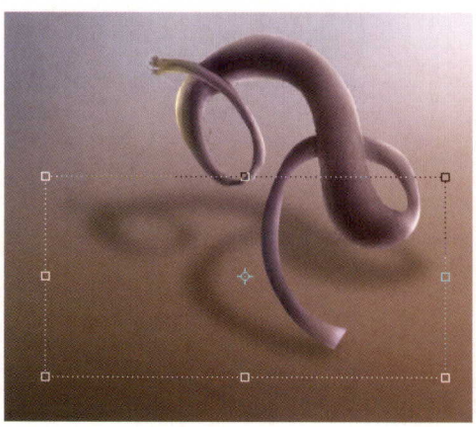
05 3D effects

Now to make the shape appear 3D. Select a soft round brush (Opacity 50%, Flow 40%). We paint dark purple in the middle and rim lighting on the sides. Once you have all the shadows and light in place, take your hard round brush, with Pen Pressure settings activated, and go over what you did. This will give it texture and more detail. Finally, take a 4px hard round brush, go into Brush Settings, check the Scatter option and brush lightly over the shape with dark brown dots. Change this layer to Overlay to add further texture.



06 Shadows

The final step to this shape is to create its shadow. Duplicate the shape and fill with a very dark brown. Once you have done this, unlock the layer and go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur, making the Radius about 9 or 10. Free Transform your shape, flattening it out and giving it the appearance that it's lying on the ground. You may need to stretch it to the right and enlarge it to improve the aesthetics of the image. Move the shadow under your shape, just slightly to the left. Remember a light source will tend to cast the shadow of an object in the opposite direction. Lower the Opacity to around 50-60%. Follow this process for all the shapes that you create.

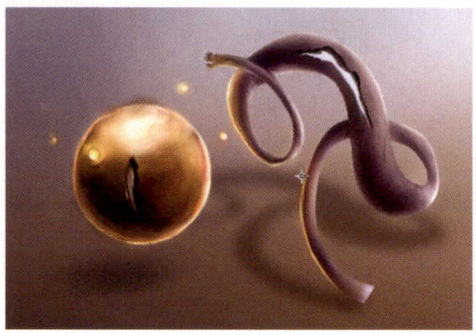


07 Creating orbs

Next we create a floating orb; the process is the same as that employed in Step 5. To make a perfect circle, hold Shift and drag the circle to the size you want and fill it with the base colour of your choice. We give our orb a Center Glow light source, to give it a more surreal feeling. Around the edge of the orb, we take a hard round brush at 19px and draw a light-yellow glow. For detail, paint little circles floating around by making a few points with a hard round brush, then apply a bright yellow on low opacity. You can also add a few dots to the spheres themselves.

08 Going with the glow

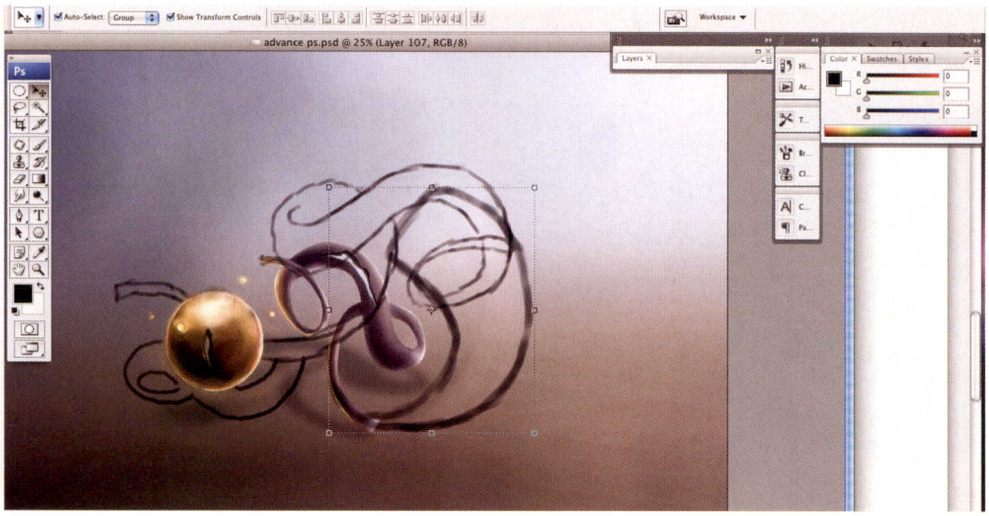
We add some more glow to the orb by taking a soft round brush at 100px and brushing over a light orange and changing the blend mode to Soft Light. We then outline the edge of the purple shape with orange; you'll find doing the sharp edges of shapes with a hard round brush works best. If you want contrast and glows, Overlay and Soft Light are your best friends. You can add a crack into the swirl shape by unlocking the shape's layer and erasing a crack-like shape. Then go in and paint the inner edge a very dark brown.



> You need to correspond each shape's shading to its position in the piece

09 More shape outlines

Now for some more shapes. We start off with the same process as in Step 4 – doing a rough outline sketch. We create shapes that interact with each other, giving a very unique and interesting flow to the composition. Having them connect and work together will result in a much more balanced final work. Don't spend a lot of time trying to get these lines perfect, as they are only guidelines.

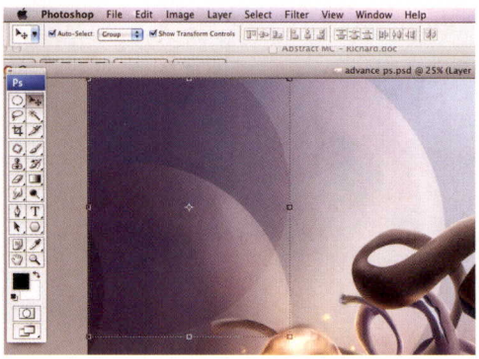


10 Mind the light

You can now see that we have brought the shapes to life. Refer to Steps 4 and 5 for the process. The only thing different is the lighting. You need to correspond each shape's shading to its position in the piece, for instance the shapes that are closest to the glowing orb now have vibrant orange reflections.

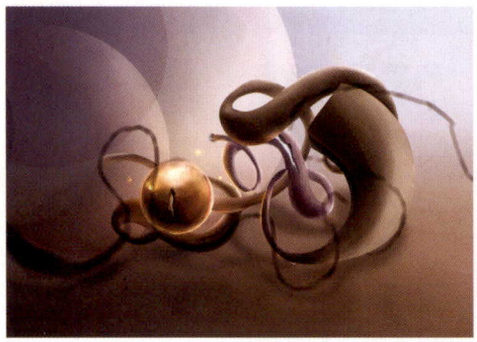
11 Going in: circles

The next step is pretty easy. Use the Circle Marquee tool and hold Shift to create large circles in the background. Once you have your selection, fill it with a neutral brown colour. Turn the blending mode to Overlay and set a low opacity. Do this about three times until you have a nice variation of circle sizes.



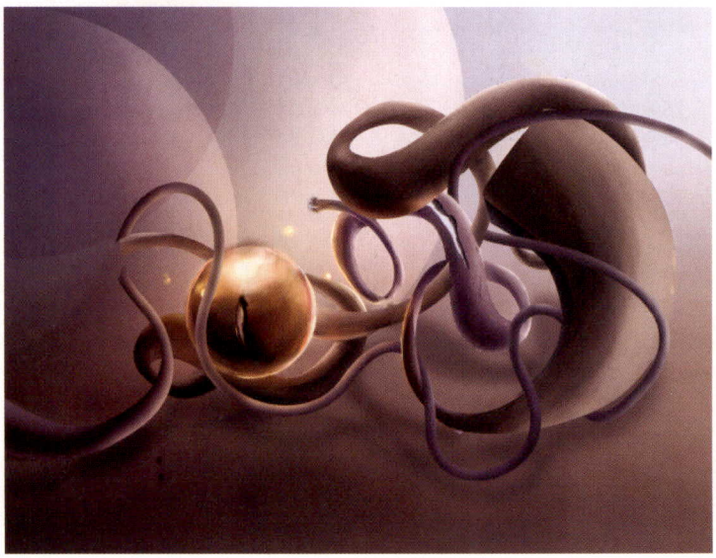
12 Add a swirl

At this stage, we start to sketch out an intricate swirl shape that runs between all the forms made so far. The process is the same as that used in Steps 4 and 5. A great way to add depth is to have the shape start out large and slowly get thin. This creates the impression of distance. Try to have your shape go around and behind other shapes for more interest and complexity.



13 Check your lighting

Here is the swirl shaded and finished. Always keep in mind where the lighting is, because it will affect where you shade lights and darks greatly. If an object has light surrounding it, the shadow will be in the middle of the shape with highlights on the outside. You can see this with the shape on the far right. To paint in light hints of orange, take a soft round brush, about 60px, and lightly paint it on the edge of the shape. Again, for contrast, use the blending modes Overlay and Soft Light.



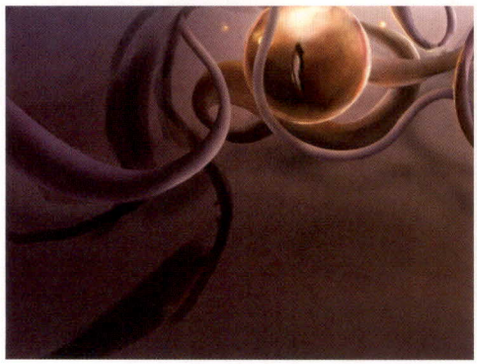
Quick tip

If you want to add more intense light to an area to make it pop, take a soft round airbrush, about 100px, and brush over the area you want to increase the lighting intensity. Set the blending mode to Overlay or Soft Light and play with the opacity. Use whatever colour you want to light the area, depending on the feel you want to achieve.

Tutorial

14 Foreground shapes

Here we start sketching a foreground shape that starts out fairly big to create the impression of depth. We then connect it to one of the smaller shapes. It's important to bear in mind whenever sketching new elements that you want there to be a good flow and unity between each new shape. If you don't plan ahead, your piece may end up lacking balance.

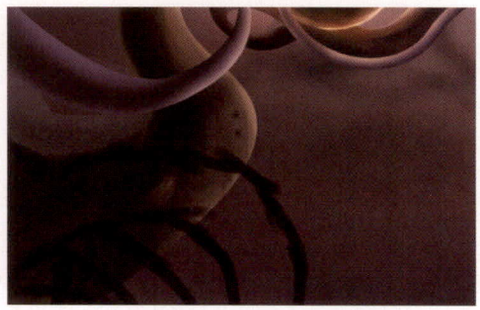


15 And repeat...

After you've done the base sketch for the shape, repeat the process used in Steps 4 and 5. First, outline the shape with the Pen tool, creating a path, and then fill it. We then paint the shadows and lights using two brushes – first, the soft airbrush and then the hard circle brush for detail. The right side of the shape touches the glowing orb; therefore will require bright highlights.

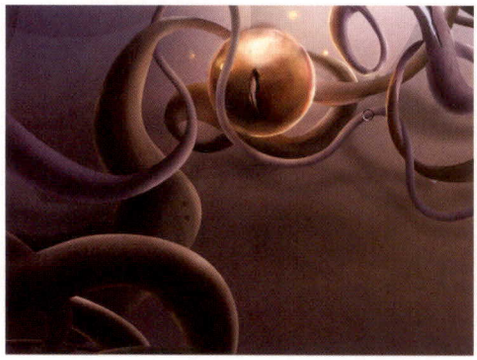
16 Add more depth

To create even more defined dimensions, we start sketching out some more foreground shapes. We first create the larger one in the front and beneath sketch another tube-like shape. Having your shapes at different distances is a great way to add perspective. Whenever working with shapes that appear three-dimensional, it's essential to avoid letting your piece look flat.



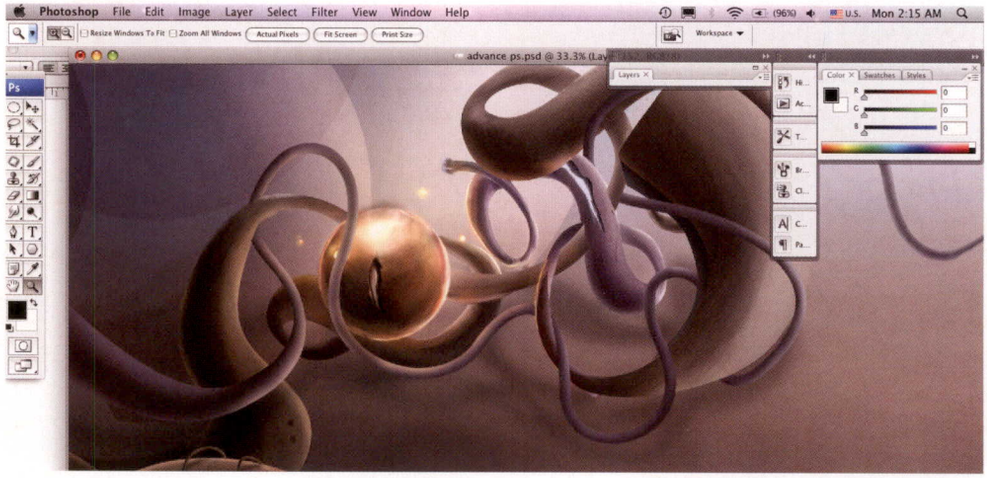
17 Overlap shadows

Here, you can see both shapes have been painted. We add rim lighting on the outside edges to reflect the main light source. If a shape is overlapping another, then it's important to add a shadow. To work out where a shadow might lie, just think about the direction your light is coming from; for the most part, the shadow will be on the opposite side.



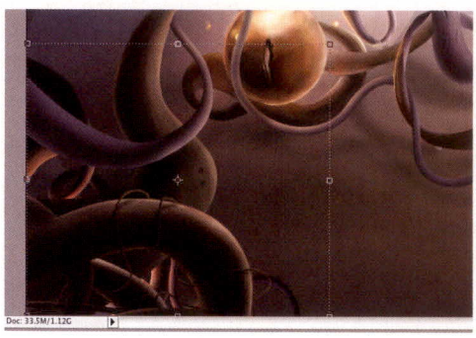
18 Details

Here, we simply add some smaller vine-like shapes on the frontal shapes. A quick way of doing this is to first sketch out where you want them to be. After that, take your Pen tool and create a line path of where the sketch lies, and then Ctrl/right-click and choose Stroke. Make sure your brush is set to 12px, 100% Opacity and Flow. Next, lock the layer and start brushing in the correct lights and shadows. Underneath the lines, create a shadow using a soft, dark brown brush, painting where you want to add shadows and lowering Opacity to 50%.



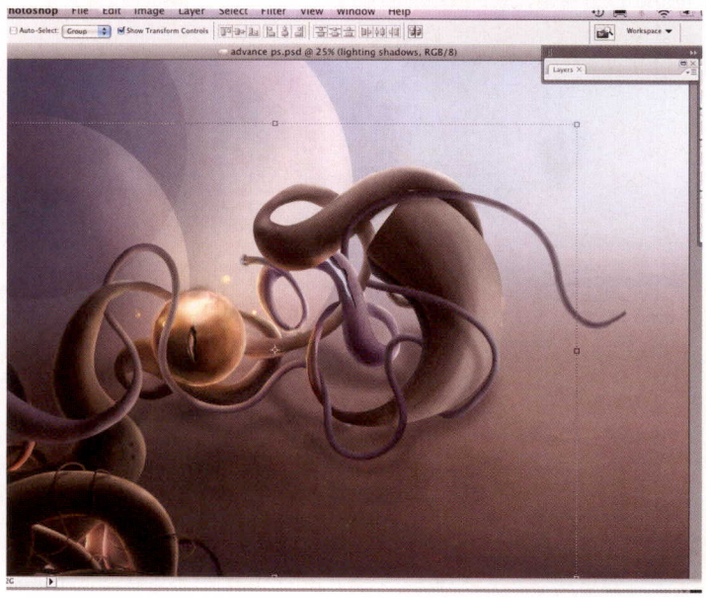
19 Duplicate and merge

Next, we create a duplicate layer of all the shapes and merge them together. Position that layer below the others and go to Edit>Transform>Flip Vertical and position it under the new foreground objects. This easy step adds some nice orange tones to our foreground. Creating new shapes is a tedious task, so this can be a great way to quickly bump up the number of elements.



20 Lighting techniques

Here we add some more light to the orange areas that were created in the previous step. We take an orange airbrush and brush over the new orange areas, setting the blending mode to Screen. This is a useful technique, as it produces an impression of glowing. Remember to readjust the light on your shapes so that it corresponds to the new glowing areas. To do this, simply go to the shape you want to adjust and make sure the layer is locked. Brush softly on the shape's edges with whichever colour you're lighting it with.

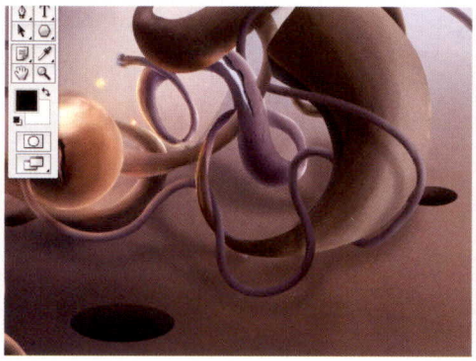


Quick tip

When you finish the image, create a black-and-white Gradient Map and set the blending mode to Luminosity. It will balance everything out and add a nice overall contrast to the image. You can also play with the Levels as a finishing touch, adjusting them to your preference.

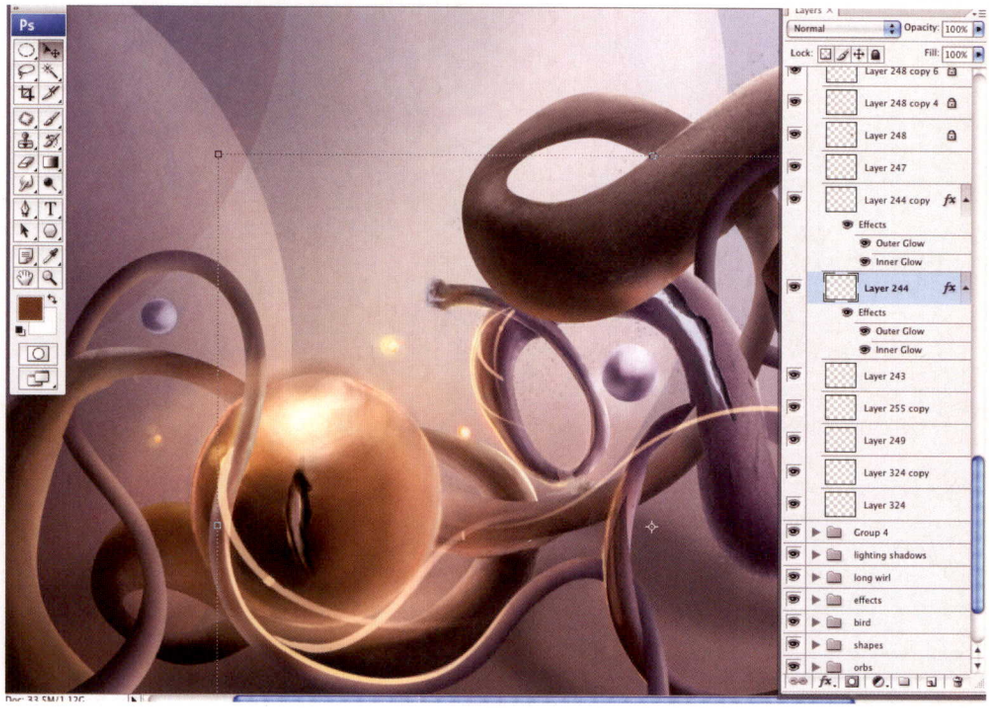
21 Digging 'holes'

The next stage is to create 'holes' in the floor of our piece. Create a dark brown circle with the Circle Marquee tool, making sure to hold Shift for a perfect circle. Then, using the Transform tool, flatten it out until it looks like it's flush to the floor. Once you have done this, lock the layer and, taking a soft airbrush set to about 300px and Opacity 20%, brush the top edge of the shape.



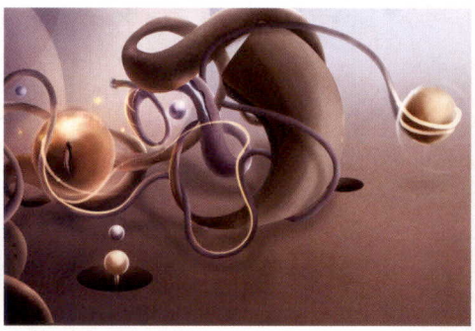
22 Keep on glowing

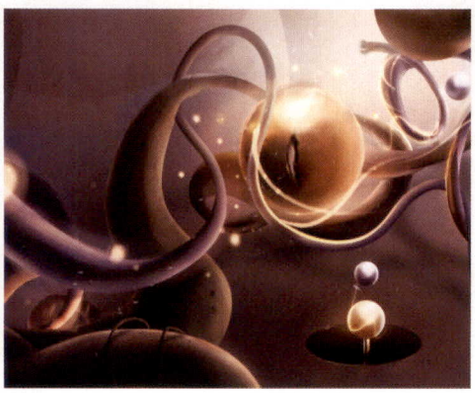
Take a hard round brush (100% Opacity and Flow) and make sure the colour is orange or yellow. Take your Pen tool and draw a flowing path, Ctrl/right-click and choose Stroke Path. Check the Simulate Brush Pressure option. Go to your Layer Style settings. Choose Inner Glow and Outer Glow. On Inner Glow, set the Opacity to 100% and change to an orange colour. For the Outer Glow, set the Opacity to 85%, the Blend Mode to Linear Dodge and the Size to 13.



23 More orbs

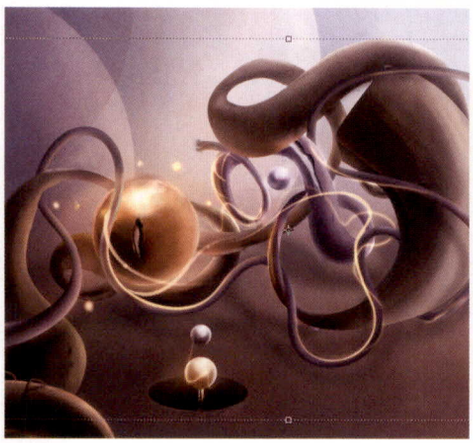
The next step is to create more orbs to fill out the artwork. The process is the same as that used in Step 7. For the colours, we choose golden tones and also some purple orbs. The effects on the orbs are glowing lines that are created by brushing the graphics tablet with a hard round brush, using the same settings detailed in Step 22.



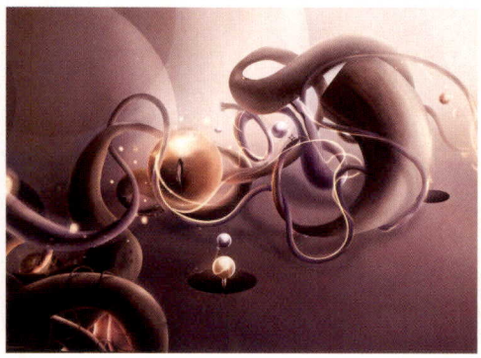


24 Build the composition

Here we are adding more light effects as seen in Step 22. Before placing them, it's best to plan out their positions, just as we did with our shapes. After creating some lines, we start to paint some glowing dots and glowing particles. The glowing effect works on all small shapes that you make, as long as you apply the appropriate settings and add realistic light and shadows.



> The glowing effect works on all small shapes that you make, as long as you apply the appropriate settings



25 Particle effects

Next, we create some more particle effects. We decide to get rid of the purple background and go with a warm orange/brown colour scheme instead. To achieve this, we take a large round airbrush – 300px – and brush over the purple-blueish colour. We use a light, warm orange colour and set the blending mode to Color with Opacity at 65%.

26 And finally...

The good thing is if you don't like any elements at this stage, you can just paint over them. We adjust the lighting and colours, as well as incorporating a few more sparkle details and background orbs by duplicating the larger orb and repositioning it further back in the piece. Finally, we apply some blur effect to these shapes to add to the impression that they are far in the distance.

DIGITAL MIXED MEDIA

Master the amalgamation of both digital and traditional art techniques to create this exotic, multi-textured image

Mixed media styles have always been popular with illustration and graphic design artists. The digital platform has just taken this style up a notch. Photoshop in particular lends itself to creating awesome effects through its layers and layer blending mode functionality. Photoshop's brush engine also provides first-class creative solutions – enabling you to upload and even create your very own custom brushes from imported textures and photo stock.

In this tutorial, we'll be showing you some sure-fire techniques to get effective results, though in most cases, aesthetics are a matter of trial and error and personal taste. There are rarely any certainties with such an immediate style, and we strongly promote experimentation to get the best-looking grunge, as well as, traditional media effects.

Blending modes are the one exception – each one applied in this artwork helps you understand how images can interact with laid textures. We'll also explore settings that allow you to lay and overlay mixed media brushes to create grunge, watercolour and ink splat style effects. You'll discover that mixed media doesn't just mean pencil and crayon, and we'll be showing you how to integrate photo stock with some sophisticated selection techniques, layer masks and manual paint methods. Now, all you need to do is get stuck in to some mixed media mayhem.

Our expert

Adam Smith
www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk/user/Adam

Adam Smith tests his mixed media skills, doing what he does best – translating them into a digital format.

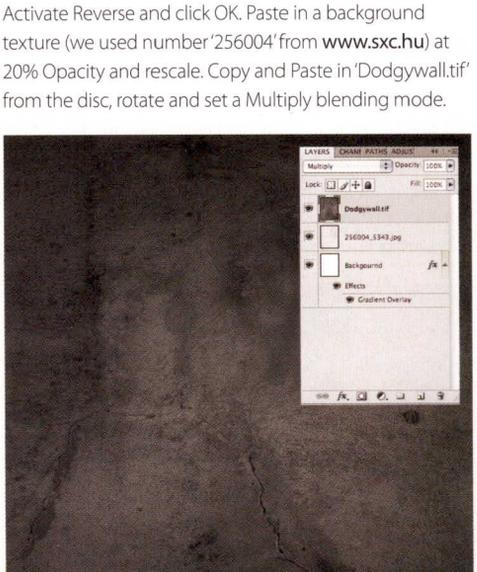
Source files

This month we have a mix of iStockphoto and our own images for you to use in completing this tutorial. The lovely model, produced by Kevin Russ (**www.kevinruss.com**), is to be used as your base. You'll also find many jungle-related items and even hand-drawn resources by Adam Smith, which can be used to flesh out your own designs.

> "There are rarely any certainties with such an immediate style, and we promote experimentation to get the best-looking grunge, as well as traditional, effects"

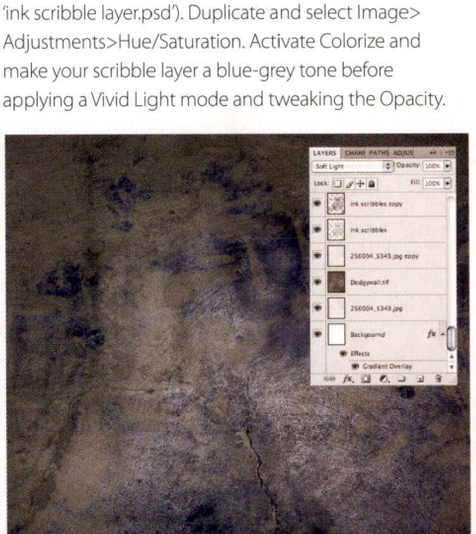
01 Background gradient

Start by opening a 235 x 305mm, 300ppi document. Apply a Gradient Overlay from the layers style options. Set a Radial style, black to white, at 43% Opacity. Activate Reverse and click OK. Paste in a background texture (we used number '256004' from **www.sxc.hu**) at 20% Opacity and rescale. Copy and Paste in 'Dodgywall.tif' from the disc, rotate and set a Multiply blending mode.



02 Texturing your backdrop

Duplicate your first texture layer, place it at the top of the stack and apply an Overlay blending mode at 30% Opacity. Load some scribble brushes or make your own (we used Fudgegraphics Ink Scribbles brushes) and apply light grey styles on a new layer – much like in the thumbnail (or take from the CD called 'ink scribble layer.psd'). Duplicate and select Image> Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. Activate Colorize and make your scribble layer a blue-grey tone before applying a Vivid Light mode and tweaking the Opacity.

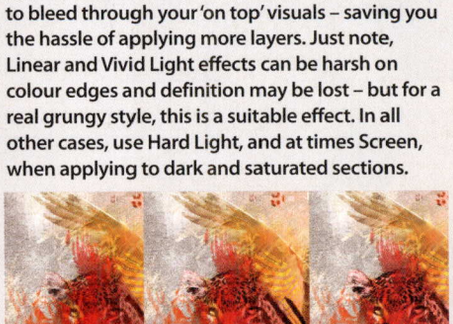


03 Minor adjustments

We've duplicated a bottom cut section from the 'dodgy wall' layer, placing above all others, and have applied a Soft Light blending mode. Edges have been integrated by applying a layer mask, creating a light-to-dark, top-to-bottom exposure. Press Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Opt/Alt+E, merging all and press Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert all, creating a gold/silver colour value.

Letting in textures

There are a few fundamental settings which will make your mixed media images look more authentic. The application of texture to image elements isn't always necessary. This is where blending modes come into their own – namely Hard Light, Vivid Light and Linear Light. When applied, these settings allow the texture beneath to bleed through your 'on top' visuals – saving you the hassle of applying more layers. Just note, Linear and Vivid Light effects can be harsh on colour edges and definition may be lost – but for a real grungy style, this is a suitable effect. In all other cases, use Hard Light, and at times Screen, when applying to dark and saturated sections.

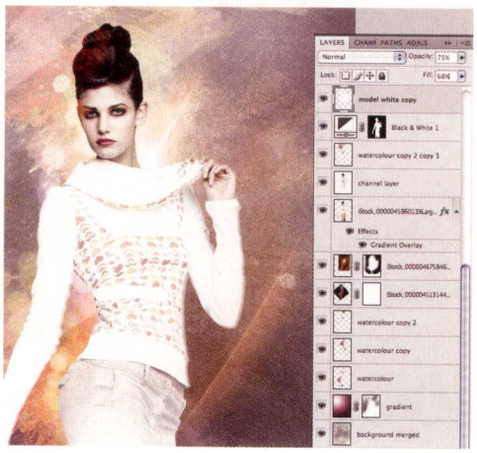


04 Cutting out your model

Open your model image ('iStock_000004596013Small.jpg') and select the Pen Path tool. Apply around your model edges, select the Path palette, Cmd/Ctrl-click your path layer, and lastly Make Selection. Copy and Paste into your document, adjusting size (see thumbnail). Apply an Linear Gradient Overlay layer style, white to transparent, at 90 degrees. Set Scale to 26%, repositioning with the Move tool on your image.

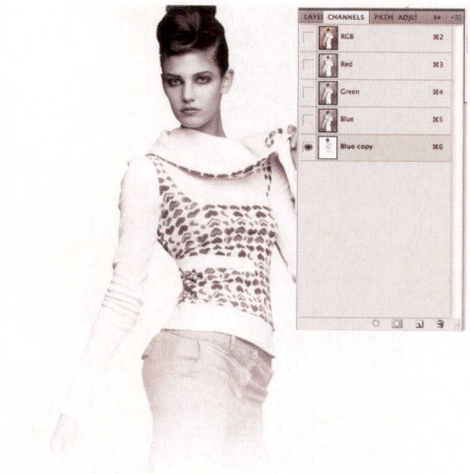
05 Watercolour textures

On a new layer, behind your model, begin to build up watercolour textures using watercolour brushes (ours are Fudgegraphics Watercolour brushes) or open 'water colour layer.psd'. Apply these with varying hot tones – oranges, yellows, pinks – with a 70% Overlay blending brush. Set the layer to Screen blending mode, and duplicate several times – repositioning above and below your model layer, rescaling if necessary.



06 New adjustments and channels

Select your Channels palette and duplicate your Blue channel. Apply Levels until you have created a strong contrasting exposure, then select your channel using the Marquee tool and Copy and Paste into your Layers palette. Apply a Multiply blending mode at 40%. Cmd/Ctrl-click your model layer thumbnail and add a Black & White adjustment layer Set: Red at -119, Yellow at 140, Green at 40, Cyan at 40, Blue at 20 and Magenta at 80. Apply a Screen blending mode, at 70% Opacity.

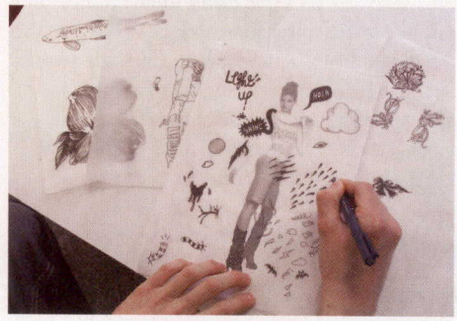


08 Edit model's clothing

Create a new layer beneath your watercolour layers, applying a white, red and black Radial gradient – using the Gradient tool, top left to bottom right. Apply a Multiply blending mode at 60% Opacity and carefully mask away the top-left section with a 70% Opacity brush. Now, make a selection around your model's hoodie, pressing Cmd/Ctrl+J. Place this new layer above your Black & White layer, before increasing Brightness (via Brightness/Contrast) to 100.

Traditional drawing tools

When approaching even digital mixed media projects, traditional drawing tools are still highly applicable. There are several types that you should really consider investing in. Specialist drawing pens are a must. Gel and ball tips allow you to apply strong ink strokes and come in a variety of millimetre sizes for that perfect line. A set of watercolour paints and wet inks (Indian inks dry faster) are also great for producing specific and authentic textures, which can be scanned and blended. Tracing paper is great when using your image as a guideline or copying existing photographs by hand – then scanning so you can add them to your image separately.



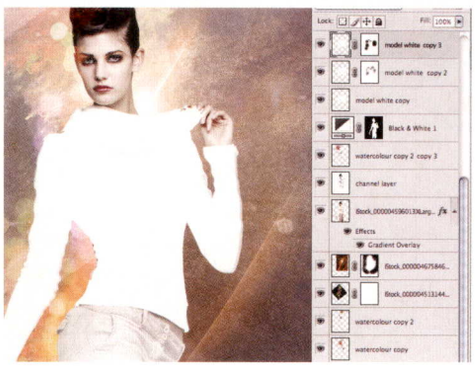
07 Lighting effects

Copy and Paste in the 'iStock_000004675846Small.jpg' abstract light image, placing behind your model layer. Change colours with Photoshop's Hue/Saturation option and apply a Screen blending mode. Mask away noticeable edges. Do the same for the 'iStock_000004513144Small.jpg' magical lights image, but set Opacity at 80%.

> A set of watercolour paints and wet inks (Indian inks dry faster) are also great for producing specific, authentic textures

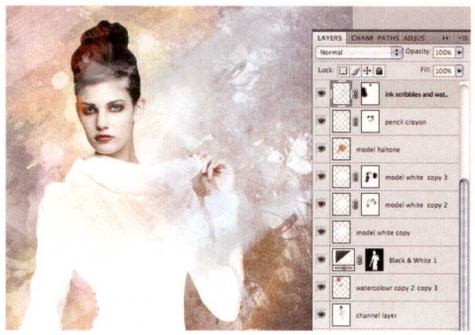
09 Revealing clothing contours

Set Opacity to 75% and Fill to 68%. Duplicate this layer and increase Fill Opacity to 100%, but layer mask away with a 30% Opacity soft brush, revealing clothing folds. Duplicate this copy layer, increasing Opacity to 100% and again mask away to reveal contours and hide the clothing pattern altogether.



10 Pixel effects

Duplicate your original white top layer – Fill and Opacity at 100% – and place above all layers. Select Filter>Pixelate>Color Halftone and set Max Radius to 8. Use Hue/Saturation to set orange tones and apply an Overlay blending mode. Apply a light blue wash from the model's right shoulder and an orange pencil crayon texture to the model's top on new layers.



11 Solid colours

Duplicate your original model layer, trashing the attached layer mask and layer effects. Move this duplicate to the top of the stack, Cmd/Ctrl-click the layer thumbnail and fill with a solid purple tone. Set blending mode to Hard Light, Opacity and Fill at 70%. Duplicate your original model again, deleting effects and place above the last. Fill as before but with a solid black.

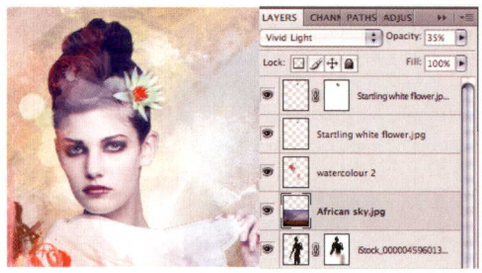
12 More watercolour layers

Instead of altering Opacity/Fill values of this new fill layer, apply a layer mask and erase from the thighs upwards with a soft-edged 70% Opacity brush. Create a new layer, titled 'Watercolour 2' and, as before, paint in textures, using red, brown and orange Fudgegraphics Watercolour brush styles.

> On two new layers, apply a light blue wash from the model's right shoulder on one and an orange pencil texture to the model's top on the other

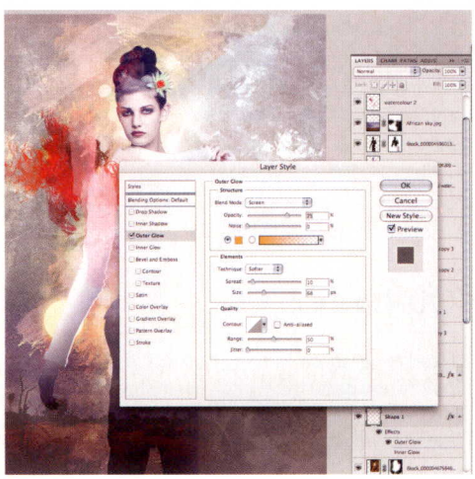
13 Flowers in her hair

Cut out, then Copy and Paste in the 'Startling white flower.jpg', setting a Screen blending mode, before placing in your model's hair. Duplicate your layer and reset tones, so your pollen turns red – use Hue/Saturation to set the Hue to -58. Reset blending mode to Normal and mask out black background values. Paste the 'African sky.jpg', rescale and apply a 35% Vivid Light blending mode.



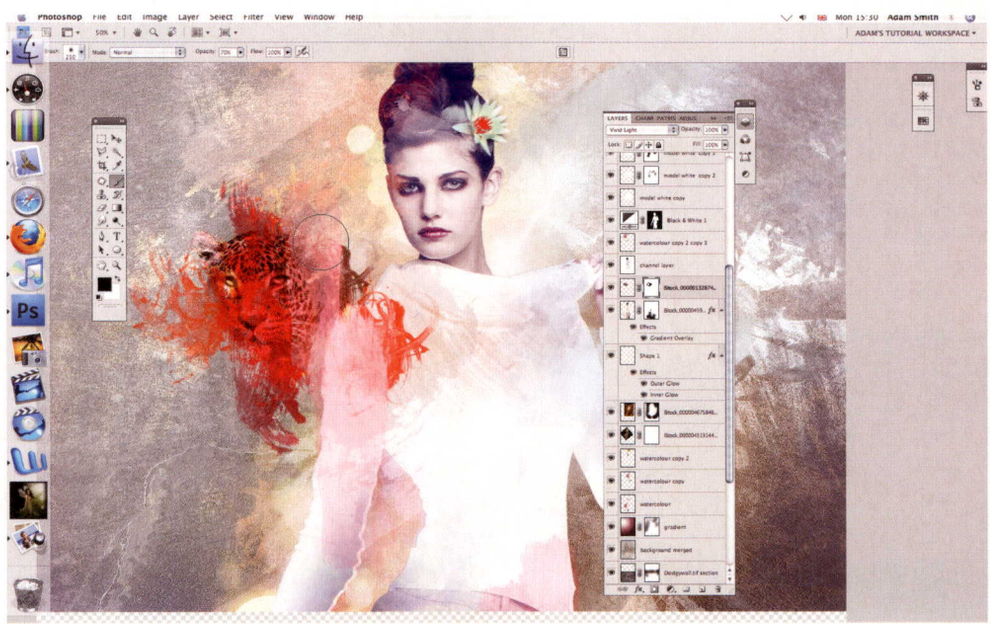
14 Light orb effects

Apply a layer mask to your sky layer and erase the right side of your layer with a 70% soft brush and integrate noticeable edges. Create a pale yellow circle using the Ellipse tool and place it beneath your model layer. Apply an Outer Glow layer style set to 75% Opacity, orange and Screen (with Spread set to 10%, Size 68px).



15 Adding animals

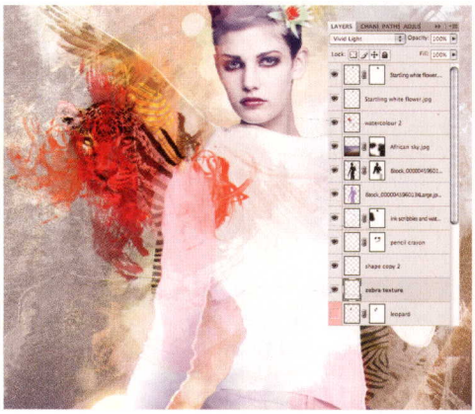
On the same layer, apply a 75% Opacity, pale yellow, Screen Blend Mode Inner Glow – with Spread set to 0%, Size 128px. Open the 'My first leopard.jpg' leopard image and Cut, Copy and Paste the cat into your image. Reposition and adjust colour using Hue options. Drop this layer in behind your channel layer, applying a Vivid Light blending mode and integrating edges using a layer mask.



Tutorial

16 Fleshing out effects

Build up layers, using personal or the additional images on the disc. We've applied another leopard image, a wing behind our original leopard and have Cut, Copy and Pasted a zebra pattern in behind our model. These elements are integrated using 70% Opacity Overlay mixed media brushes. We've also applied hard-edged shapes created with the Pen tool, setting the blending mode to Multiply (see thumbnail).

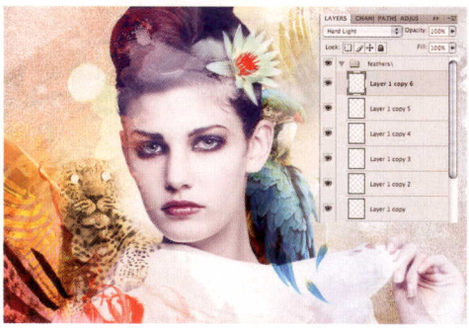


17 Manual gradient

Copy and Paste in a parrot image (we used number '1036109' from **www.sxc.hu**) and place behind your original model layer, resizing with the Transform>Scale option. Duplicate this several times and drop behind your model's back, so that feathers are peaking out beneath her left arm – filling space. We've altered tones using Hue options, creating a vibrant orange-to-green gradient.

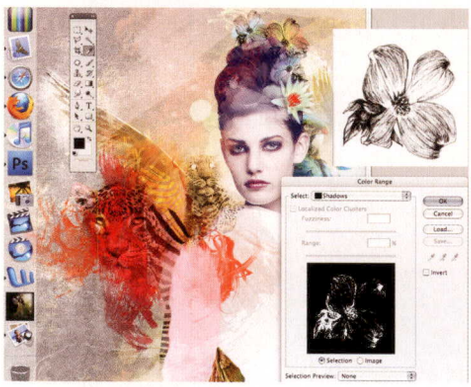
18 Feather effects

Copy and Paste in a feather image (we used number '1051853' from **www.sxc.hu**) and duplicate, placing each as if falling from your parrot. Set all feather layers' blending modes to Hard Light, and store them in a new group, at the top of the layer stack. Next open the 'bits.jpg' from the resource CD and use the Crop tool to select only the flower illustration.



19 Applying hand-drawn elements

Apply Levels for a good contrast – defining clean lines and a clear backdrop. Select the Marquee tool, Cmd/Ctrl-click your image and select Color Range. Choose Shadows and Copy and Paste into your image. Do this several times, repositioning and rescaling illustrations above your model. Use mixed media brushes on a separate layer beneath to paint in colour value.

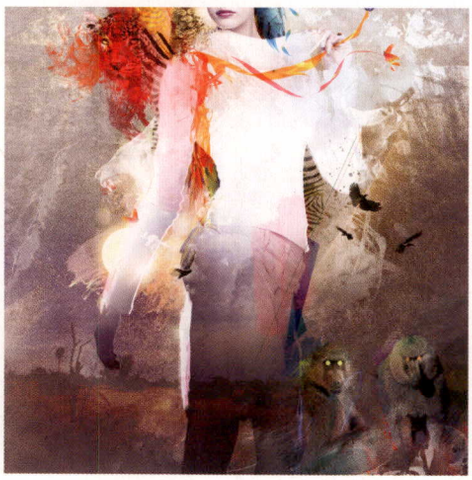


20 Flowing shape effects

After adding a few more mixed media layers to our model – just scratch and set paint marks to Screen – we set about making a flowing sash for her. This is made from drawn Pen shapes and uses Edit>Transform> Warp to create flowing shapes. Hard Light blending mode is again applied, using Copy and Paste to add butterflies which are resized and painted over.

21 Monkey business

Open 'Baboon eye contact.jpg' and Copy and Paste into your image, masking away the background around the primate. Change the Hue to a blue/green, set the blending mode to Overlay and then apply a lime green Overlay layer style, with Linear Light changed to 3 and Opacity to 5%. Now duplicate your baboon layer.

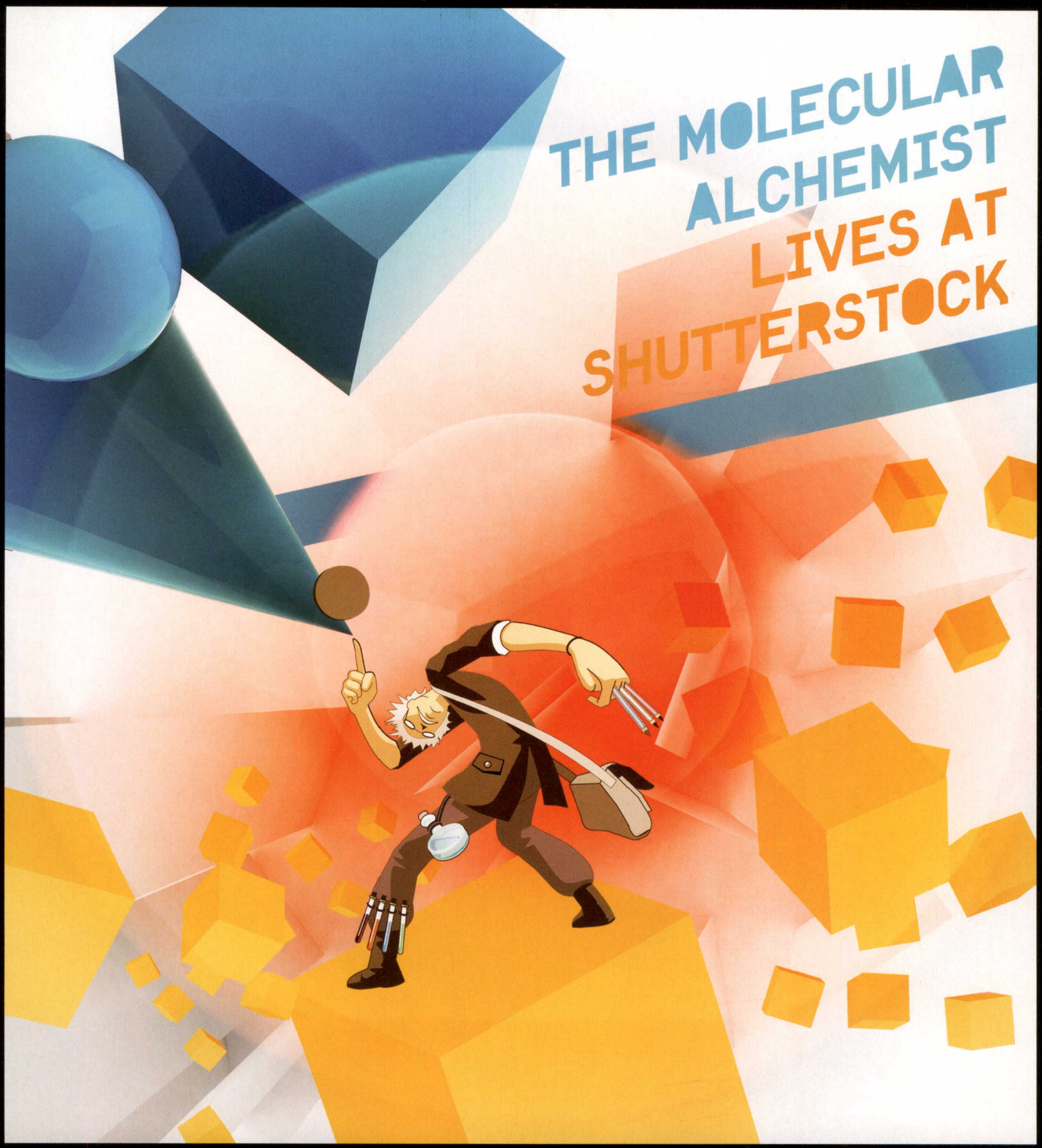


22 Finishing touches

Apply a 60% blue, red and yellow gradient at a 65 degree Angle to your duplicate layer, with the blending set to Multiply, then start masking away the right side. Now you can add a second baboon image (such as '1069980' from **www.sxc.hu**). From here, add more line art and mixed media textures and use brushes to integrate elements and tighten the piece as a whole.

Quick tip

Need to get those scanned illustrations crisp before you paste them into your image? Easy – just duplicate your layer and apply an Overlay blending mode, Merge All and select a crisp edge.



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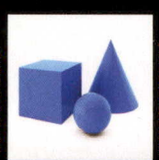
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ACTIVE GRAPHICS

Grasp this graphics mash-up, then go it alone, creating your own styles

Digital software is excelling the world of graphic illustration. With a no-holds-barred approach, commercial and personal designs are drawing from many influences and mashing up some super cool styles. Anything goes and images are built up from a host of references, including digital stock imagery, scanned-in textures and textiles, hand-drawn elements and 3D effects. All come together to create a random and unique aesthetic experience. Commercial artists such as Studio Blup, Oh Yeah Studio and many more besides are adding inspiration hand over fist.

Adam Smith recaps on the effects produced in our own creative crescendo, revealing how to reproduce this attractive contemporary design. A range of Photoshop tools and techniques are applied to realise dramatic and far-from-systematic styles. This tutorial shows you how to create realistic glass layers from scratch in our favourite app, using nothing more than selection and gradient tools. Blending modes and layer masks once again become essential in reproducing tangible textures, while Depth of Field (DOF) and hand-made 3D forms, using little more than the Pen Shape tool and Blur filters, are also utilised, creating believability in your image elements and composition as a whole.

Read on and experience these impulsive applications, then go ahead and throw down your very own active graphics.

Our expert

Adam Smith
www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk/user/Adam

In this tutorial, Adam puts his graphical eye and digital skills to the test, replicating commercial styles in an easy-to-follow fashion. He writes for *Advanced Photoshop* magazine.

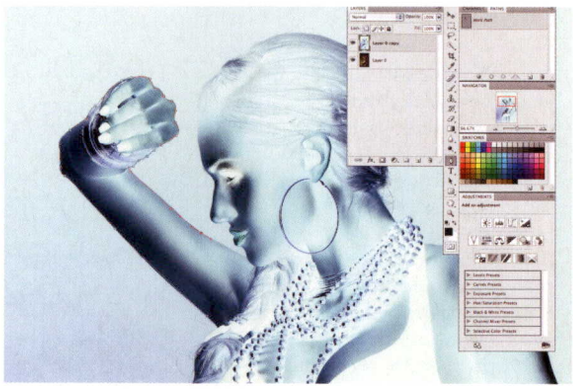
Source files

This month's CD has supplied you with a host of textures used in this project, as well as personal stock from the *Advanced Photoshop* image bank. This is complemented by a collection of iStockphoto.com images, essential in re-creating this composition. Many thanks to Izabela Habur, aka Izusek, for supplying the original model image.

> "With a no-holds-barred approach, commercial and personal designs are drawing from many influences and mashing up some super cool styles"

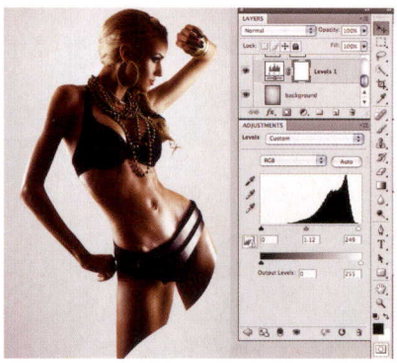
01 Cut out

Open the model and duplicate the Background layer. Press Cmd/Ctrl+I, inverting and defining the model's edges. Use the Pen tool (set to Paths) to draw around the model. Select the Paths palette, Ctrl/right-click the Work Path thumbnail and choose Make Selection. Activate your original model layer, and paste into a new document (ours is 230 x 297mm).



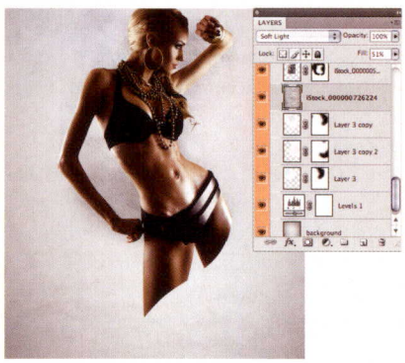
02 Laying your foundations

Flip your model horizontally, then size her down. Use the Lasso tool to create a selection around the lower part of her legs and delete to match the screenshot. Double-click the Background layer to make it editable, then fill with a mid-grey. Use Dodge and Burn tools with 30% Exposure to create a vignette effect – dark corners and a brighter centre. Apply a Levels adjustment layer above the Background layer and below the model, tweaking the highlights to brighten.



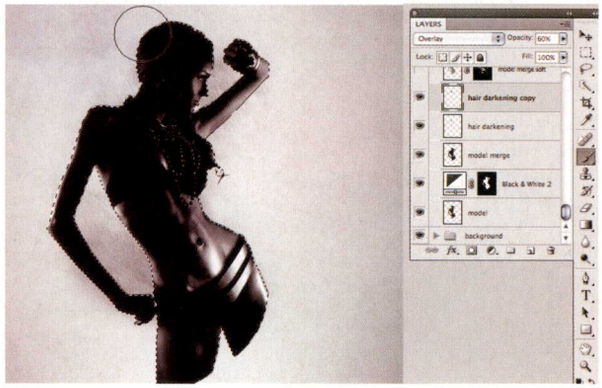
03 Colour wash

We're going to add various grunge textures. Open whatever takes your fancy, paste into the main document and desaturate. Apply a Hue/Saturation Colorize treatment, then a Multiply blending mode. Grunge brushes with Multiply achieves a similar effect. Layer masks help integrate edges. We've also applied a paper texture ('iStock_000000726 224') set to Soft Light with Fill reduced to 50%. This step is all about having fun and adding personal touches.



04 Monochrome skin effects

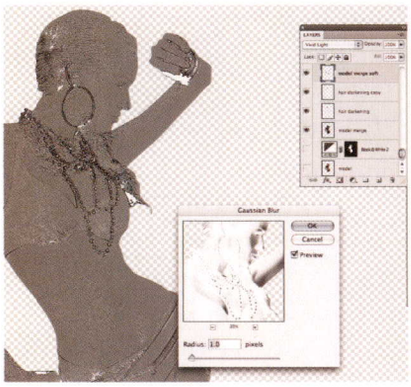
When you're happy with the background, you can work on the model. Cmd/Ctrl-click the layer thumbnail to create a selection and apply a new Black & White adjustment layer. Set Reds at -20 and Yellows at -165. Merge your model and adjustment layers together in a new layer (turn off visibility for all the other layers and Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Opt/Alt+E, then make them visible again). You can selectively darken parts of the model by painting onto new layers with a 30% Opacity soft black brush and setting the blending mode to Overlay. Don't forget to select the model (Cmd/Ctrl-click the layer thumbnail) to target the painting.



Tutorial

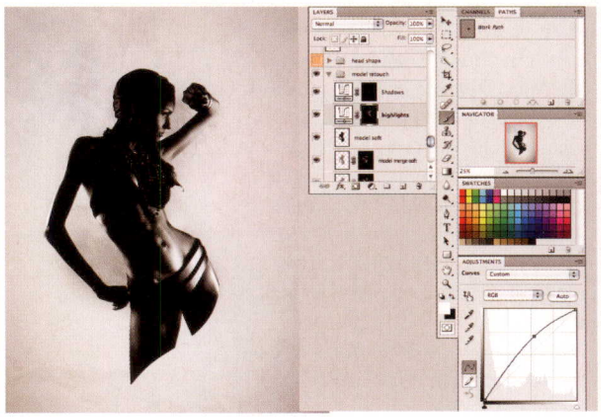
05 Skin smooth

We want to smooth away pores and imperfections, so treat moles, scars, etc, with Photoshop's cloning tools. Again, merge all related model layers into a new layer. Duplicate this and apply a Vivid Light blending mode. Invert this new merged layer and apply a 1-pixel Radius Gaussian Blur. Next apply a 2-pixel Radius High Pass filter. Select Layer>Layer Mask>Hide All.



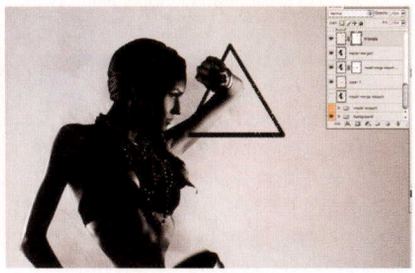
06 Body contours

Apply a white soft-edged brush, set at 80% Opacity, to your new layer's mask to reveal gradual skin softening. Merge all model layers into a new layer. Add two Curves adjustment layers – one with extreme highlights, the other with extreme shadows. Invert the layer masks (Cmd/Ctrl+I) and paint in exposure effects to the body contours using a 20% Opacity brush. Merge all the model layers into one layer (select them all and Cmd/Ctrl+E) and apply a layer mask.



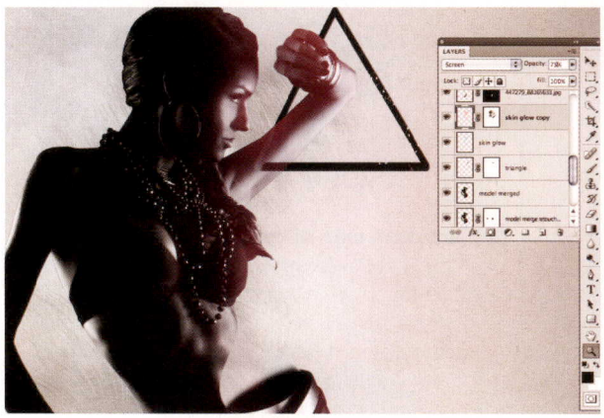
07 Adding angles

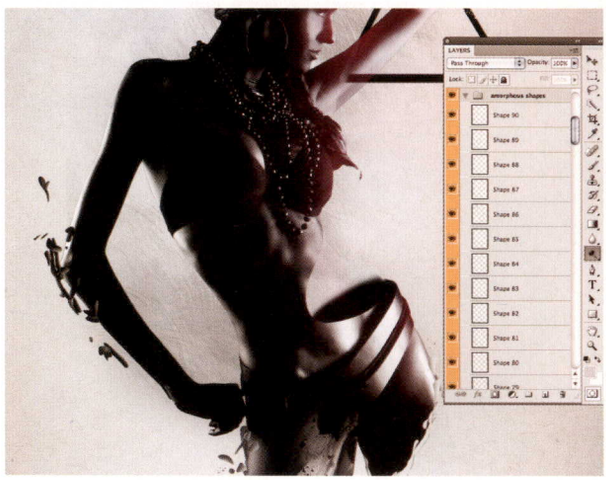
Use a hard-edged black brush on the layer mask to hollow out your model's midriff. On a new layer beneath the model, paint with a black brush to create an illusion of depth, then merge with the model layer. On a new layer, create a triangle using the Pen tool. In the Paths palette, Ctrl/right-click and Stroke. Create a textured version by Cmd/Ctrl-clicking your triangle layer thumbnail, activate your model layer and move the selection over her body, then Cmd/Ctrl+J. Move this new triangle back to its original position and delete the first triangle layer.



08 Coloured lights

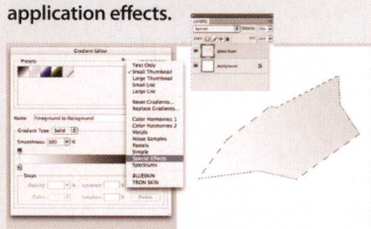
Integrate the triangle shape with a layer mask, moving in behind your model's arm. Applying light tones to the skin is easy. Create a new 30% Opacity layer and paint a blue tone on your model, converting to an Overlay blending mode. Duplicate and transform the tone to hot pink using Hue/Saturation, then apply a Screen blending mode. Set Opacity to suit (we're at 75%).





Glass effects

You can easily create authentic glass effects using solely Photoshop. Start by opening a modest sized document and choose the Polygonal Lasso tool, making a jagged selection in a new layer, named 'Glass'. Activate the Gradient tool then open the Gradient Editor dialog box. Activate the flyout menu (by clicking the triangle icon) and select the Special Effects gradient set – choose a Gray Value Stripes style. Set your Gradient tool at 20-30% Opacity and apply to your layer selection. Now all you need to do is invert the selection and apply a hard-edged dark blue, grey or black brush to your selection edge creating a 3D glass effect. Follow Step 10 to achieve the best application effects.



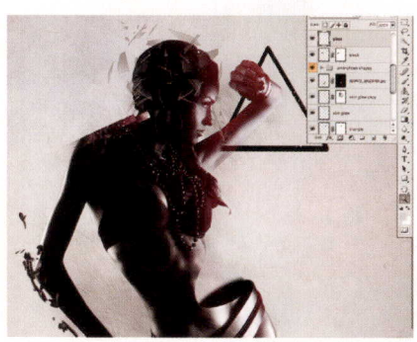
09 Amorphous shapes

We've integrated a grunge texture to our model's leg (courtesy of **www.sxc.hu/profile/elisafox**, image number '929472') with Hard Light blending and a layer mask. We've also added a host of amorphous shapes using the Shape tool. These are rasterised white shapes, selected, with shading applied using the Burn tool (30-90%, Highlight Range). Soft white and black brushes (10% Opacity) are applied to create a 3D feel. Play with different effects here.

> Applying light tones to the skin is easy. Create a new 30% Opacity layer and paint a blue tone on your model, converting to an Overlay blending mode

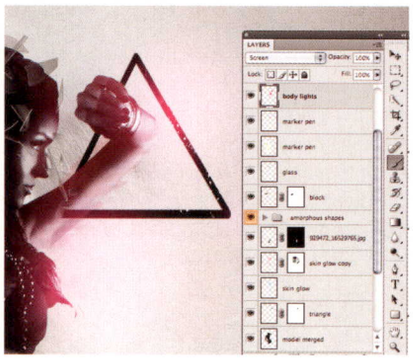
10 Extra elements

Let's add more elements of interest. Create a block displacement effect on your model's shoulder by selecting and duplicating from your model layer with the Rectangle Marquee tool. Apply the shattered glass effect by re-creating techniques in our Glass effects boxout – or import the 'glass elements.psd' file from our resource CD. Glass layers may need to be duplicated several times, or enhanced with the Multiply blending mode for noticeable effects.



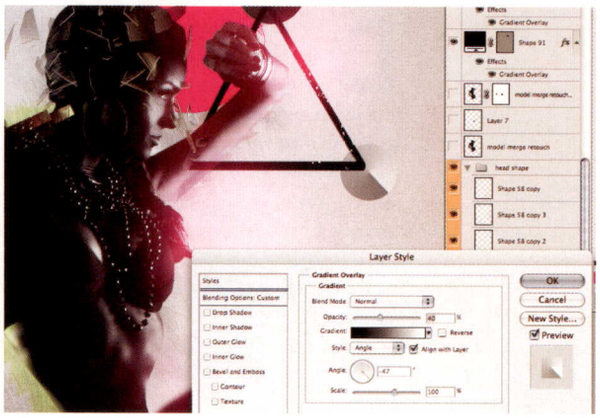
11 Electro lights

Create a new layer and set a Screen blending mode. Select a hot pink brush, set to Color Dodge at 15% Opacity, and apply this to the front of your model. Copy and Paste in marker pen textures ('marker.jpg') and apply a Multiply blending mode. Tweak the opacity and scale and transform colours using Hue/Saturation options.



12 Placed sphere

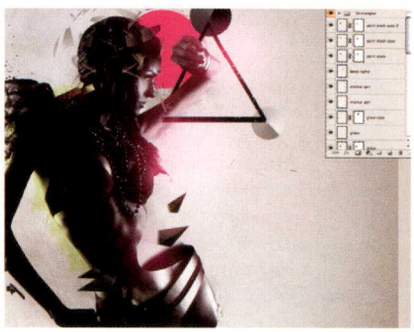
Behind the model and triangle layers, place a new hot pink shape layer, using the Ellipse tool, and add more amorphous forms. We've also applied two black circles, matching up with the triangle corners, creating symmetry of sorts. Both have black-to-white Gradient Overlays, with Opacity at 40%. Apply Color Dodge to the bottom right circle.



> Following the general rules of this tutorial, go ahead and create more elements – just go crazy. We've added skull stock and mixed media textures

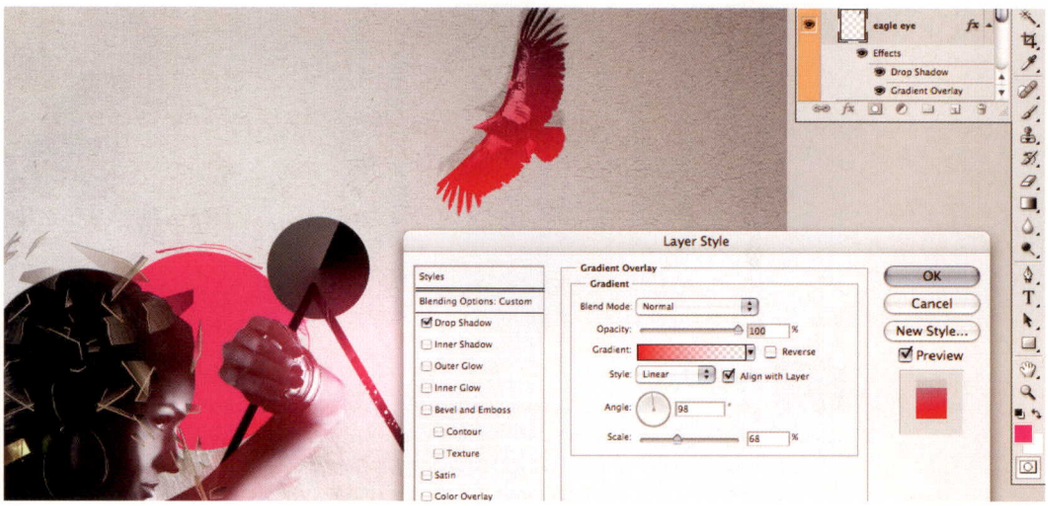
13 3D elements

Open 'A 16770.jpg' and use the Magic Wand tool, set to a Tolerance of 30, to select the white background. Erase and Copy and Paste in your paint stock, resizing over your model's shoulder. Apply Multiply blending, duplicate and place a couple more times. Next, open the '3D triangles.psd'. Copy and Paste in triangle elements, layering them around the model's waistline.



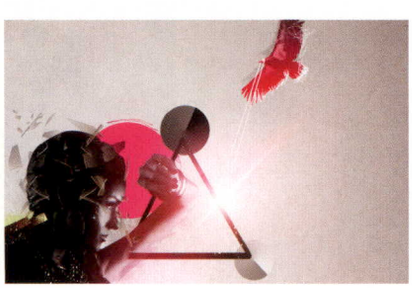
14 Bird attack

Place some 3D triangles moving out from your hollow torso, then apply slight Motion Blur to create movement. Open the 'iStock_000006259631.jpeg', then select, Copy and Paste in your bird image. Resize and position, applying a red-to-transparent Gradient Overlay, with Scale at 68%. Also apply Drop Shadow effects from the same option set. Now insert the 'iStock_000004675846.jpg' into your image.



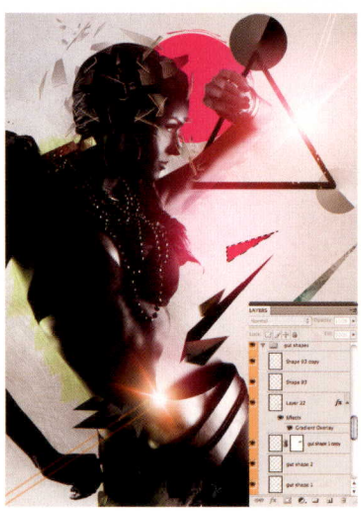
15 Eagle eye

Place over your triangle layer (see thumbnail) with a Screen blend mode. Integrate edges using a layer mask and change tones to pink using Hue/Saturation. Complete the effect with laser elements coming from your bird, on a new layer, applied with a hard pale-pink brush.



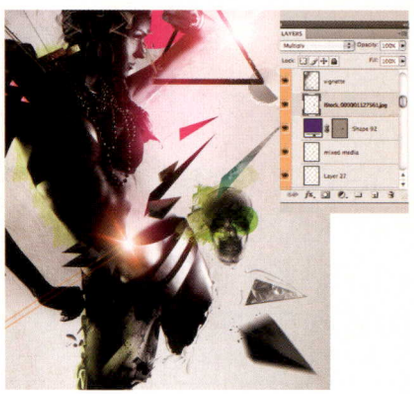
16 Pen Shape tool

We've replicated the bird effect, excluding applied gradients, using the 'Bird of prey majestic.jpeg', in the bottom left, with orange tones. We also created numerous shape layers fitting in with our overall colour scheme, bursting from our hollow model, using the Pen Shape tool. Creating these shapes, using selection tools applied to photo stock, creates greater diversity.



17 Other extras

Following the general rules of this tutorial, you can now go ahead and create more elements – just go crazy. We've added skull stock and mixed media textures, set to Multiply blending mode. More 3D triangles have been added, scaled up and blurred to create realistic DOF effects. Lines and scribbles are applied throughout using simple hard-edged brushes, and shadows are created with soft brushes, which are blurred and set to Overlay blending mode.

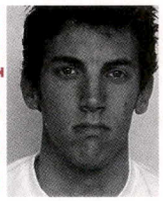


Tutorial

POSTER GRAPHICS

Create posters with impact by learning how to compose simple shapes

Our expert



Maxime Quoilin
www.remainsteadfast.net

Maxime has had an interest in graphic and digital art for just over a year. Since then, he's been featured on websites such as Behance and Abduzeedo.

Source files

You will find the mountains and paper textures used in the tutorial, courtesy of **www.cgtextures.com** and Maxime's skiing talent.

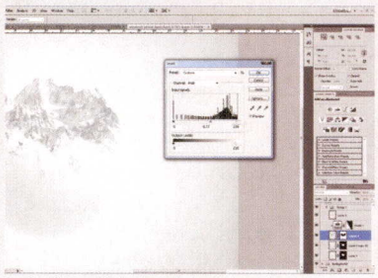
During this tutorial, we'll learn how to create abstract posters using simple shapes and complex stock images, blending them together into a stunning mix. Apart from the stock images that are on the CD, we'll only use Photoshop default features to achieve our final result. We will learn to efficiently use the Levels tool, layer masks and blending modes to achieve strong lighting and composition, giving a unique mood to the piece.

Also in this tutorial, we'll demonstrate how easy it is to add a 3D-like render to shapes, using the Burn and Dodge tools.

Natural elements such as mountains are a pleasure to work with because they offer a lot of depth, an infinite number of shapes and a great set of shadows and highlights, so they can easily turn into some great eye candy. It is very interesting to combine natural elements with the many modern photomanipulation techniques and tools Photoshop has to offer.

Levels tool

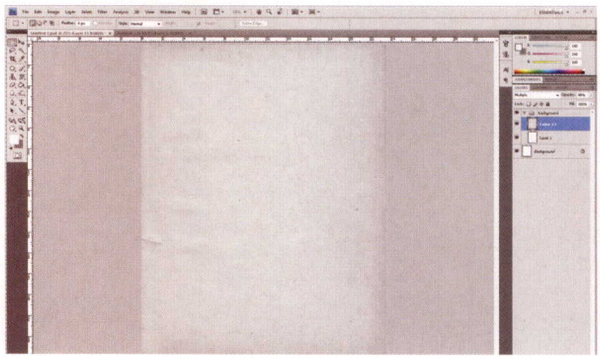
In order for the mountains to blend perfectly with the sphere behind it, your snow needs to have a similar white/grey. You can accomplish this by playing with the Levels. The Levels tool can move and stretch brightness levels in a histogram using three main components: a Black point, White point and Midtones slider. If you feel like the white/grey of your snow needs to be whiter, move the White point slider toward its left. If you feel like it needs to be darker, slightly move the White point slider under the Output levels to the left. If you feel you need some more contrast from the rocks, move the Midtones level slider to the right.



> Natural elements such as mountains are a pleasure to work with because they offer a lot of depth, an infinite number of shapes, and great shadows and highlights

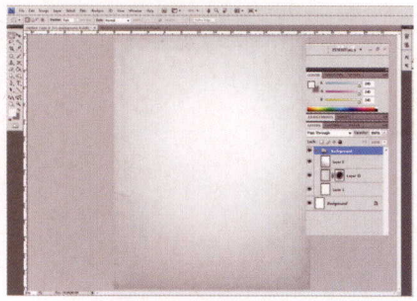
01 Getting started

Start by creating a new document, 235 x 302mm, 300dpi, RGB. Create a new layer and fill it with a very light grey ('#212121'). Load the paper texture, which is on the disc and adjust it to the size of the document and desaturate it. Change the blending mode to Multiply and lower the Opacity to 80%.



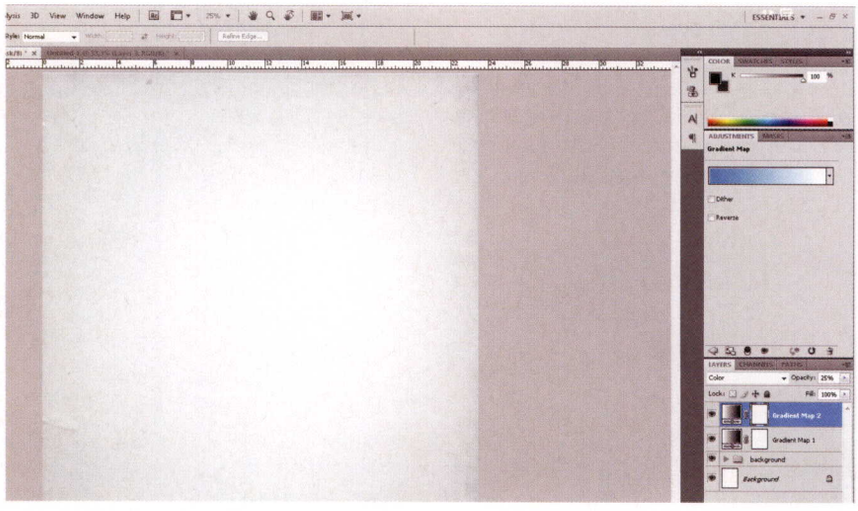
02 Background

Add a layer mask to the paper texture, and with a big soft round brush, start erasing the middle of the layer; this will highlight whatever stands at the centre. Create another layer, fill it with a white to light grey gradient, from the top to the bottom, with 30% Opacity and blending mode set to Multiply.



03 Add colours

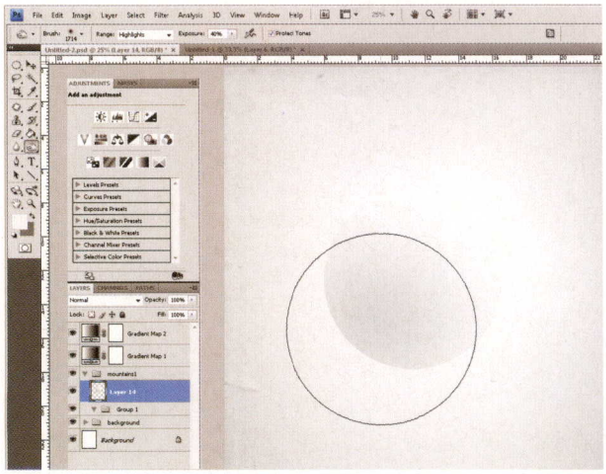
You'll mostly work with unsaturated elements. So, to give the composition some colour, let's create a group that will always stand at the top of the layer stack. In this group, add two Gradient maps from light blue ('#298ebe') to white. Make the first one with 20% Opacity and Hard Light blending mode and the second one with 25% Opacity and Color blending mode.



Tutorial

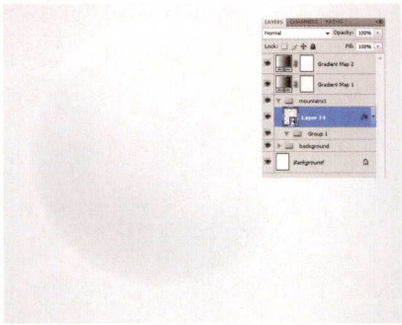
04 From circle to sphere

Now we'll start working under the group of layers from the last step. Create quite a big circle with the Marquee tool and fill that selection with light grey ('#f0f0f0') on a new layer. Using the Dodge and Burn tools with a big soft brush, and low exposure, add some shadows and highlights to that circle, so it looks like a 3D sphere.



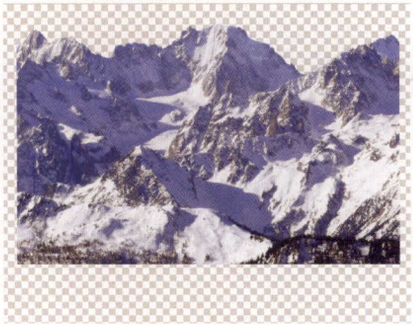
05 Highlighting technique

Once you're happy with your sphere, add a white Inner Glow effect with 80% Opacity and a Size of around 200px. This will highlight your sphere and make it stand out even more. Then convert it to a Smart Object, and save it somewhere. This way, we'll be able to use it in many different sizes later on.



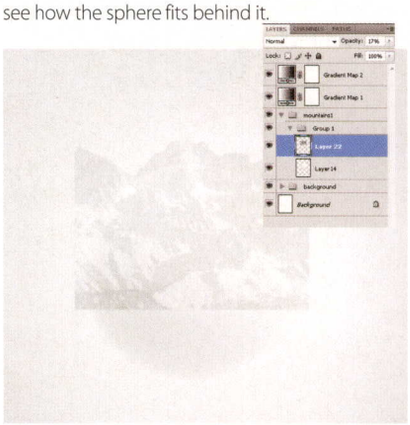
06 Mountains

Now open the mountain image of your choice from this book's disc in a new document. Cut the sky out using your preferred method and select a part of the mountain which contains at least one peak. Try to make a selection which only includes snow and rocks, as trees will be a lot harder to blend in.



07 Getting ready

Bring that selection into your composition and place it in front of the sphere. Your selection should have more or less the same width as the sphere. Place it on the upper part of the sphere and desaturate it. Reduce the opacity of the mountain image temporarily so you can see how the sphere fits behind it.

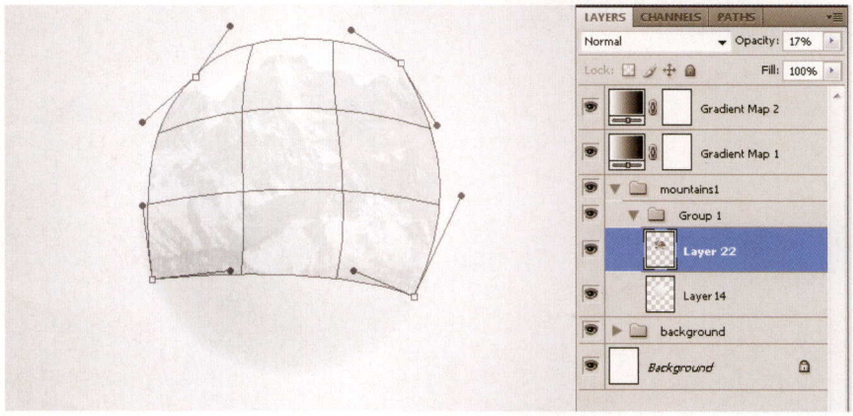


Quick tip

When designing poster graphics like this, make sure that you think about what else might need to be added to your design. Posters will usually feature text or essential information, so leave white space so that this sort of thing can be added without ruining the flow of your design.

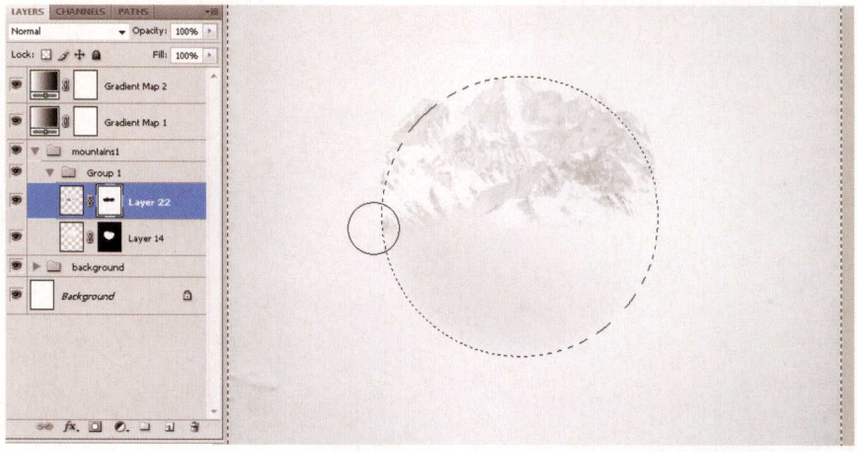
08 Warping mountains

Now comes the tricky part. Using the Warp tool, try to give the mountains the shape of the sphere. There's no precise method for this process, just a lot of experimenting. Try to remember that every element should keep looking natural, eg rocks aren't usually too curvy. You can have some parts of the mountain 'outside' of the sphere, but not the other way around.



09 Masking parts

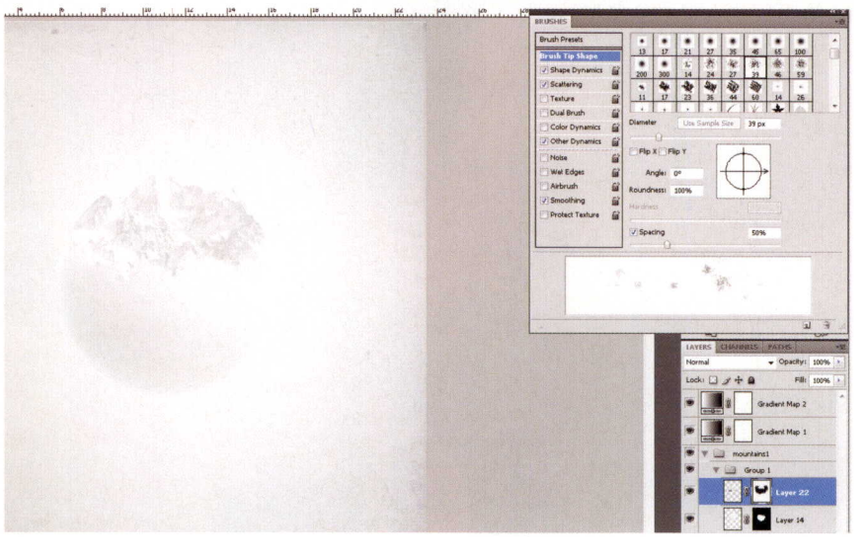
Once you're satisfied with the result, use a layer mask on the sphere layer and erase the upper parts behind the mountains. Then, on the mountain layer, use a layer mask, and erase anything in the lower part that lies 'outside' of the sphere layer with a soft black brush. As mentioned earlier, there's no precise process, just experiment until it feels right.



> "Once happy with your sphere, add a white Inner Glow effect with 80% Opacity and a Size of around 200px. This will make your sphere stand out even more"

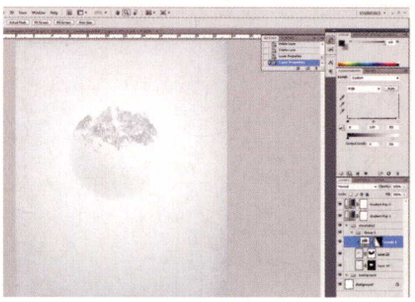
10 Blending in

To blend the mountains in the sphere, open up the Brushes palette, take a default organic Photoshop brush with 50% Spacing. Use 100% Size Jitter, 100% Angle Jitter, 1000% Scattering and activate Other Dynamics. Then, with a black foreground and a grey ('#8d8d8d') background, start brushing out some of the mountain so it really blends into the sphere.



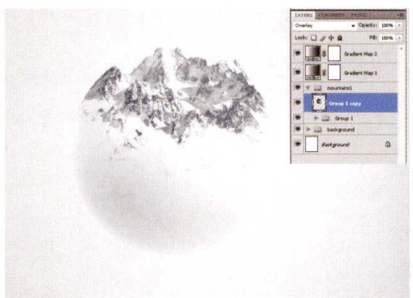
11 Continue to hone levels

For the mountains to fit perfectly with the sphere, you'll need the snow to have more or less the same colour as the sphere behind. To achieve this, you need to play around with the Levels tool (Cmd/Ctrl+L) and make the grey lighter or darker to suit your needs. You can also add an adjustment layer – this way you'll be able to use the layer mask and have better overall control.



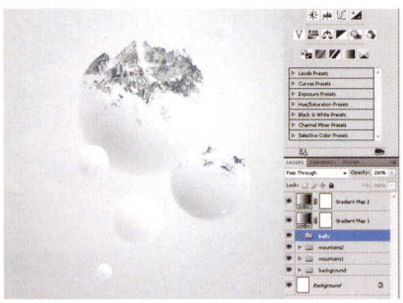
12 More contrast

If you haven't already done so, put all the mountain/sphere layers into a group, and duplicate it. Then merge the group and put the resulting layer in Overlay blending mode. This will increase the contrast of the group underneath. Use the Levels tool to obtain different results and contrasts.



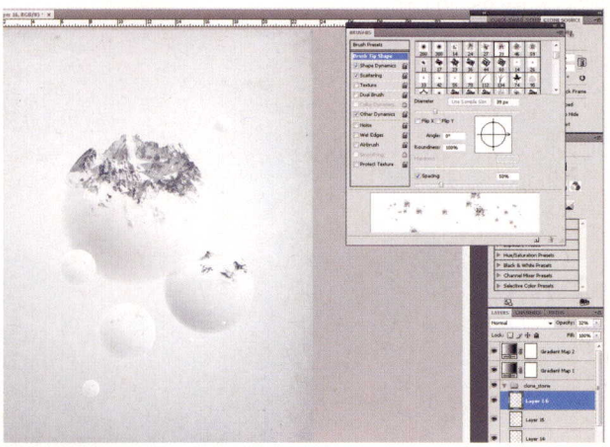
13 More mountains

Feel free to repeat the process to create different spheres. Perhaps use stock images with more snow. Add further blank spheres (saved at Step 5) in various sizes to create a decent composition. Try adding a slight Gaussian Blur to some spheres to create more perspective.



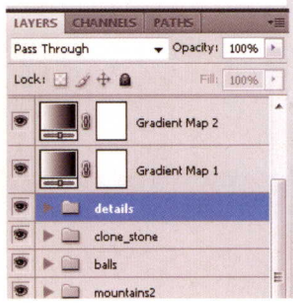
14 Texturing spheres

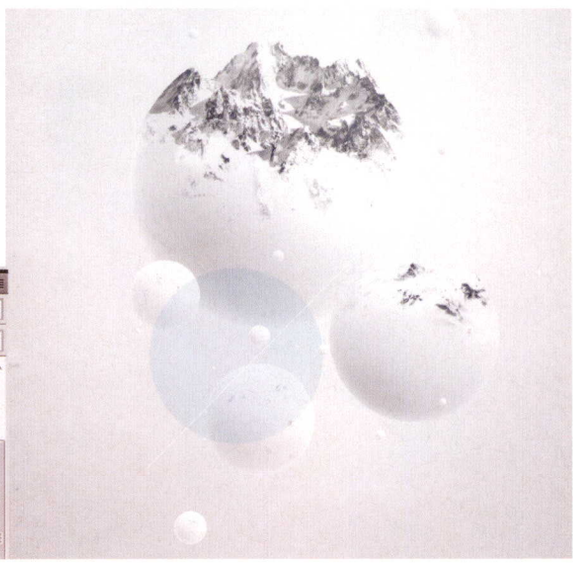
Create a new group of layers and, using the Clone Stamp tool, with the same brush as in Step 10, start cloning some interesting elements of the rocks onto the blank spheres.



15 Adding details

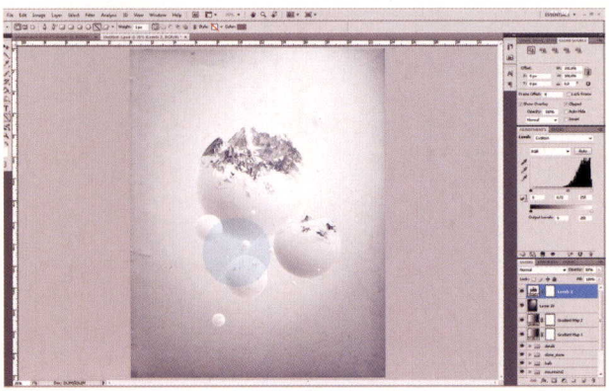
You can add more details such as circles and lines to perfect the composition. Here we created some light blue ('#209cc8') circles with a very low opacity. We also added some 2px white lines.





16 Final touch

On top of the layer stack, create a 50% grey ('#808080') layer with an Overlay blending mode. Then use the Lighting Effects filter and add some lighting from the upper right corner. Reduce the opacity of the layer until you have a satisfying result. Finally, add a 50% Opacity Levels adjustment layer and move the Midtones slider slightly toward the white. This will give the final piece a little more contrast.



Tutorial

BLEND VECTORS AND PHOTOS

Combine Photoshop and Illustrator to create vibrant graphic artworks

The objective of this tutorial is to create a photo-illustration using Photoshop and Illustrator. The example image is currently a popular trend: combining organic flowing shapes with an edgy photo of a young lady, creating a modern fantasy pop-art world.

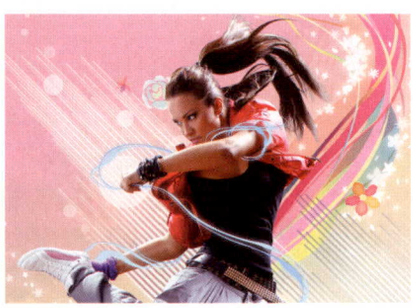
Before getting started, here are some things to note. First, Photoshop is a program built on pixels, a grid system of thousands of tiny squares that create the final image. You can see an example by simply zooming in beyond 100% to see the squares start to form. Illustrator, on the other hand, works on a vector system. The images in Illustrator are generated by a series of mathematical equations that retain their positions. This means that no matter how much zooming or resizing up you do, the image quality will remain the same: crisp and pristine.

Second, when working in Photoshop, keep a copy of the original layer/image before any changes have been made to it, so there will always be a backup version. Make duplicates of the original layer and work from those.

Finally, in this tutorial all the illustrated elements will be created first in Illustrator around an embedded image of the girl, then copy/pasted into Photoshop for final touch-ups. Download a 30-day trial of Illustrator from **www.adobe.com/products/illustrator/**.

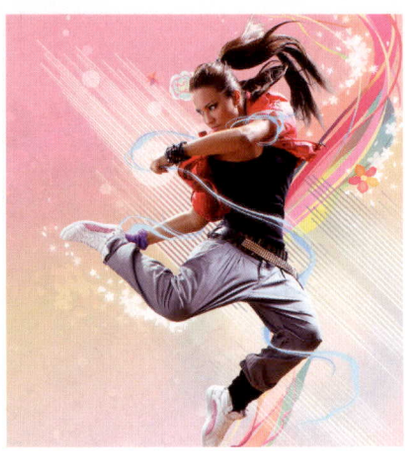
1 Style and theme

Colourful illustrations combined with fetching photography make captivating images. The style can be open as long as the final image is fresh, clean and carries a few gradients. Generally, the theme contains plenty of flowing graphic elements surrounding the human figure, usually a female.



2 Composition and design

To give an image extra edge, first build the illustrations around the essence of the photograph. In this case, the winning quality is in the power of the airborne pose. Second, establish primary focal points (girl's face, body) as well as secondary (fist, shoes) and third (background, swirls, lines). This will ensure that the eye will travel throughout the image in melodious movement.



3 Rough sketch

Before touching the computer, whip out a sketchbook as it's important to have a visual sketch of what the end result should be. This is where all the ideas – good or bad – come out and perhaps even lead to new ones. Feel free to explore and experiment.

Our expert

Wendy Ding
www.wendyding.com

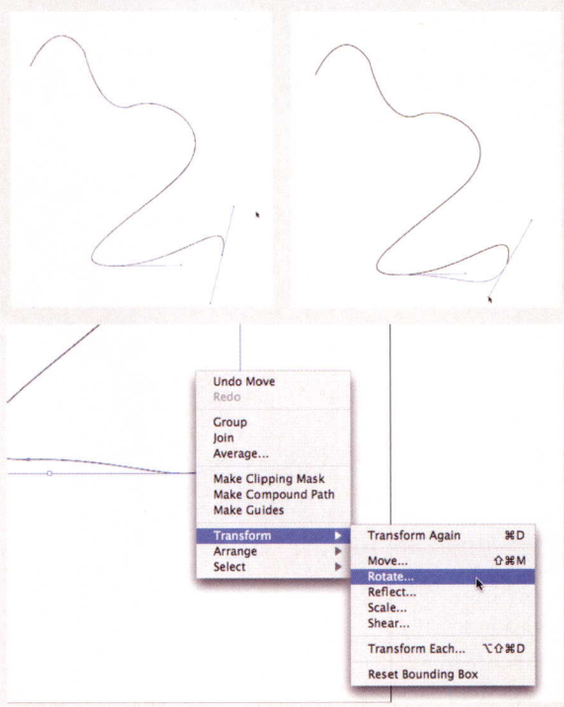
Wendy Ding is a freelance illustrator from Toronto, Canada. She specialises in digital illustration using Photoshop and Illustrator. Visit her website at **www.wendyding.com** and follow her at **twitter.com/wendyding**.

Source files

You will find the Illustrator and Photoshop elements that are needed for the tutorial on the CD, but you will need to purchase the original image from iStockphoto.com.

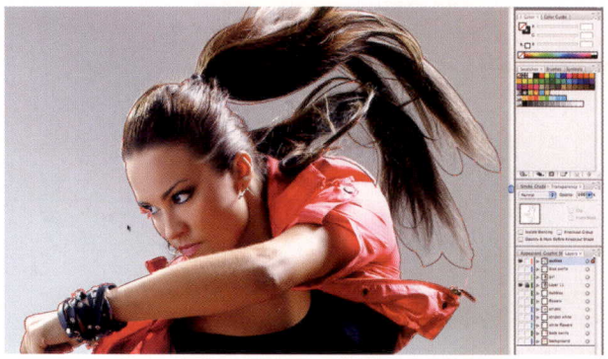
A few basics about Illustrator

If you are new to Illustrator, these are your essential tools.
Pen tool: This is the most useful tool, as it can create any shape. Simply click and drag to create Bezier curves, the foundation of all vector shapes in the program. Hover over the outline to add new points, or over a pre-existing point to delete it.
Direct Selection tool: It can select any point or Bezier curve handle and edit it by dragging or deleting. Great for when only a portion of a shape needs to be tweaked.
Transform box: Every vector shape automatically comes with its own adjustment box with functions like Resize and Scale. Its counterpart in Photoshop is prompted only by hitting Edit>Free Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T).



4 Close crop

Next, we need to remove the grey background. This process is called close cropping. In Illustrator, create a new document and File>Place the image of the girl. Select the Pen tool with no fill and a 0.5pt black stroke, and trace around her silhouette. Stay as accurate as possible and increase anchor points for areas such as clothing wrinkles.

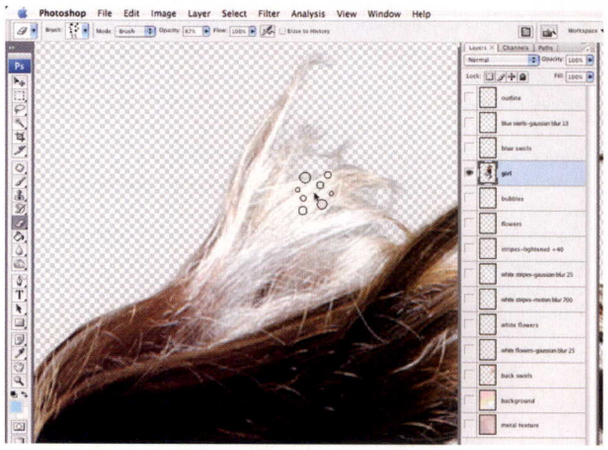


5 Save the girl

Once the outline is finished, copy/paste it (Cmd/Ctrl+C, then V) to a new layer above the girl layer in Photoshop. Save it as a PSD, as this is the working file. Using the Magic Wand tool, select the area outside the tracing, click on the girl layer and delete the negative surrounding area. Save as 'girl_closecropped.psd'.

6 Hair crop

Select the Eraser tool in Photoshop, Ctrl/right-click on the canvas and select a Scatter brush tip. Next, open Window>Brushes panel and set Shape Dynamics control to Pen Pressure. Now gently erase along the edges of the hair, taking care to preserve the feathery tips so it still looks real.



7 Background

Back in Illustrator, File>Place 'girl_cropped.psd'. Add a new layer below and use the Rectangle tool to create a background shape the same size as the artboard. With the shape selected, apply a gradient with the Gradient tool. Adjust the colours from top to bottom in pink, yellow and white in a Linear gradient.

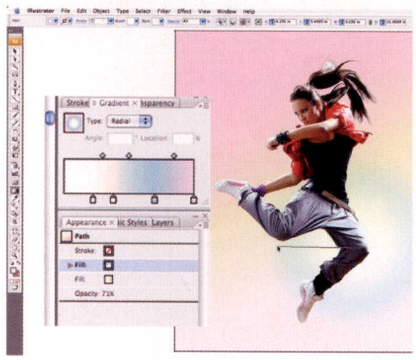
Layers

Layers are essential to keeping files organised in Illustrator and Photoshop. Ideally, each shape or element should have its own layer to make selection efficient. It also helps to keep track of what's below and what's on top so the image can be constructed logically. Always name each layer appropriately, such as 'Background' for the background layer.

In Illustrator, elements on the same layer can be selected instantly by clicking to the right of the circle along the right-hand side of the Layers panel. When done correctly, a solid square appears, and the vector shapes have an outline and a bounding box.

8 Duplicate background

Open Window>Appearances and add a second gradient layer above the previous one with the Duplicate button at the bottom. This time, drag out a Radial gradient in white, beige, turquoise and mauve with the centre positioned close to the girl's left knee. Change the layer blending mode to Multiply at 43%.



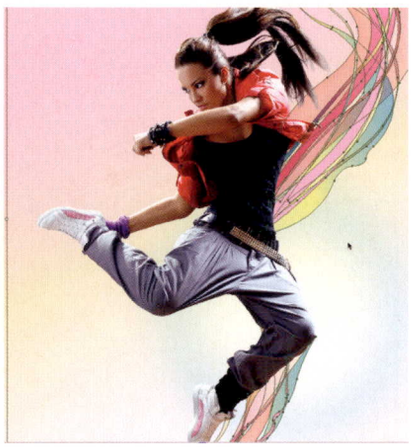
9 Background swirls

These swirls are inspired by the dynamic energy from the girl and further enhance her passion. Use the Pen tool to draw several organic tapering shapes with a healthy range of bold, sweeping, thin and winding variants. Overlap them to create a rich tapestry of dancing ribbons blooming with grace and agility.

> "Use the Pen tool to draw several organic tapering shapes. Overlap them to create a tapestry of dancing ribbons"

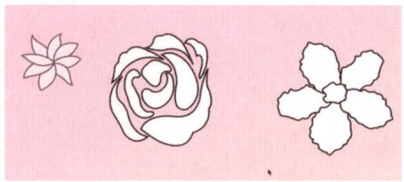
10 More shapes

Apply pastel colours to the swirls in yellow, pink, purple, green and blue, all the while keeping it gentle and fluid. Apply Linear gradients to some and Effect>Stylize>Inner Glow to others. The key is to keep it neat yet slightly random simultaneously, to maintain an organic and natural feel.



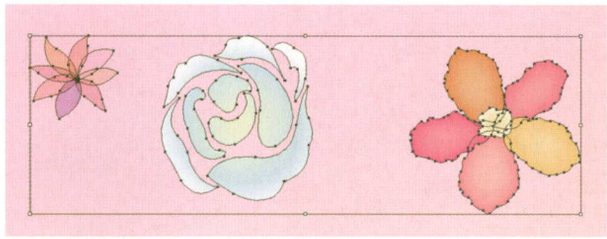
11 Flowers

Use the Pen tool to draw three kinds of circular flowers, using reference photos if necessary. First draw one petal and press Opt/Alt, then drag and click for an instant duplicate. Rotate, resize and adjust the duplicate so it forms a second petal. Repeat this process to complete the rest of the flower.



12 More flowers

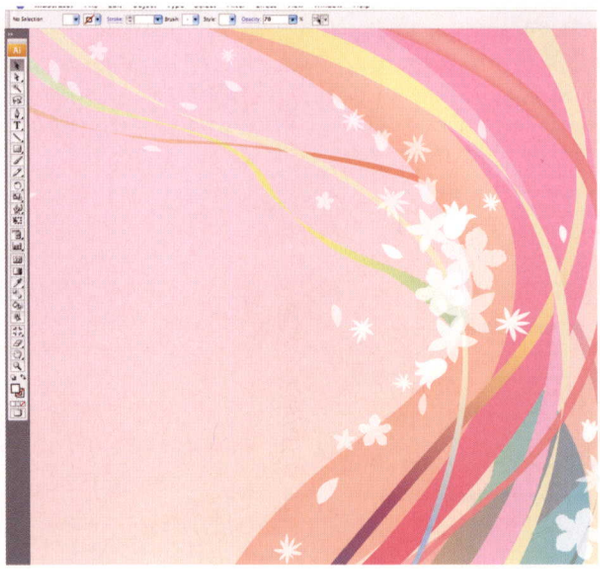
When finished, group each set of flower petals with Cmd/Ctrl+G for easier selection. Apply colours that are bright and pretty, similar to the ones for the swirls. To add excitement to the colour treatment, apply it with a Radial Gradient, Inner Glow and decreased Opacity to each flower for unique results.



> To add excitement to the colour treatment on the flowers, apply it with a Radial Gradient, Inner Glow and decreased Opacity to each flower for unique results

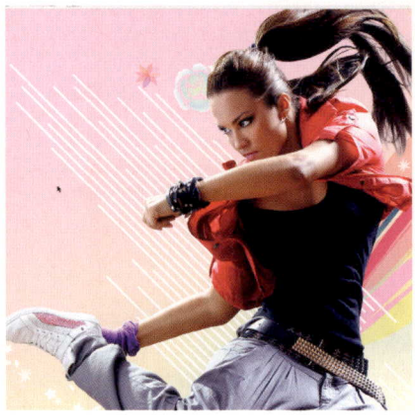
13 White flowers

Duplicate the flower layer and apply a white fill with no stroke for the new one. Using Opt/Alt and drag-clicking, create numerous duplicates to make a whole flurry of flowers. Position, rotate and resize them semi-randomly, as if they are being blown by the wind. Vary the Opacity levels between 60 and 100%.



14 White stripes

First draw a straight line with the Pen tool in a 2pt stroke width in white. Rotate the line left 45 degrees and select Object>Path>Outline Stroke. Now the stripe is a vector shape. Opt/Alt and drag-click it to one side slightly for an initial duplicate, then hit Cmd/Ctrl+D several times to create multiple duplicates.

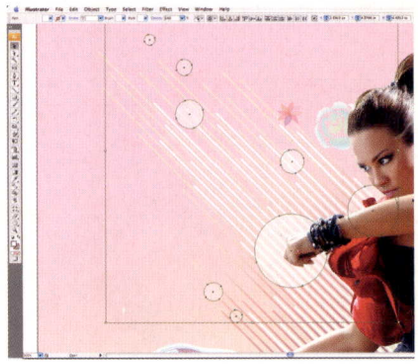


15 Coloured stripes

Shift the length and position of the stripes to make them look random, with some short and some long, working with the shape of the model when deciding on placement. When there are enough stripes, duplicate the layer and change the colour of the new stripes to a Linear Gradient with a plethora of colours. Sandwich them in between the white ones for the best effect.

16 Bubbles

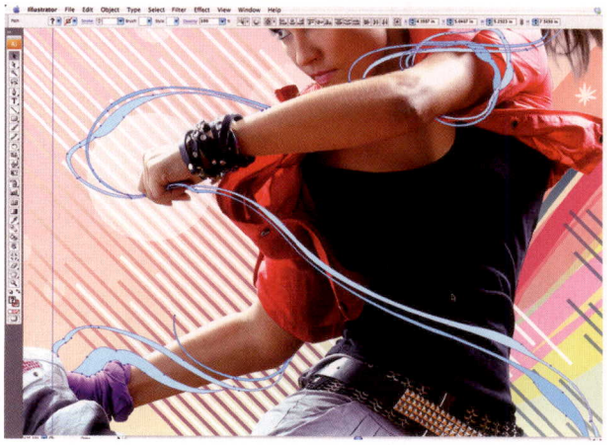
Create the bubbles using the Ellipse tool (under the extended menu of the Rectangle tool). Hit Shift then drag-click for perfect circles. Place the largest bubble where her hand is and make the rest increasingly smaller as they near the top left corner. Vary the Opacity (40-60%) to reduce the bubbles to whispers. This enhances the illusion of airy lightness.



Tutorial

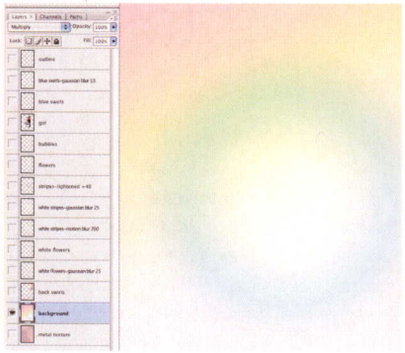
17 Blue swirls

The blue swirls suggest a rhythmic motion in the girl's movement. Use the Pen tool to draw a pair of organic vines, with one slightly more dominant than the other. Take care at the edges where they meet with her body to create the illusion that they wrap around her. Apply two slightly different sky blues to each vine.



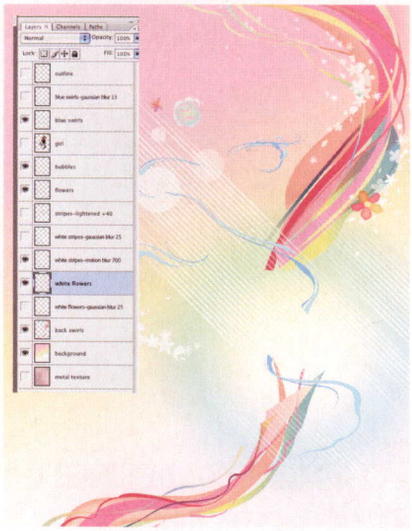
18 Illustrator to Photoshop: Background image

First turn off visibility of all layers except the background (click the eye symbol in the Layers panel). File>Export it as a JPEG. Hop into Photoshop, open the JPEG, hit Select All and copy/paste it into the working file. The reason for this is that sometimes large gradients don't paste well directly from Illustrator.



19 Illustrator to Photoshop: Other elements

One by one, copy each Illustrator vector layer and paste them into Photoshop, keeping the same stacking order. When the dialog box pops up in Photoshop, check Paste As Pixels. Spend some time with each layer to adjust, resize and position it just like it was in Illustrator. Refer to the Illustrator file as needed.

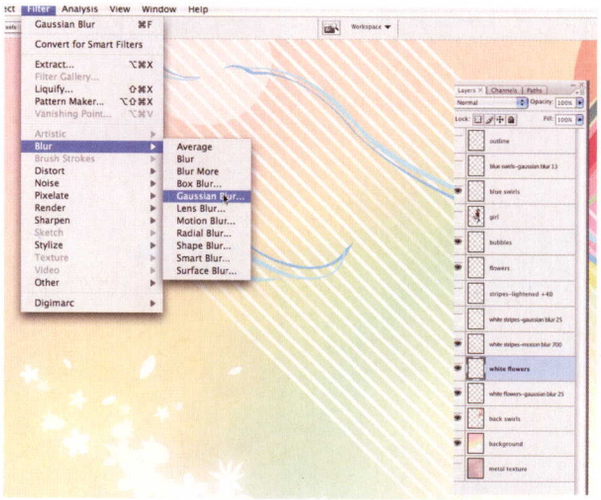


Quick tip

When it comes to texture images, www.mayang.com/textures and www.cgtextures.com are two great sites as they boast high quality photos of textures galore. For low cost or free photos, try www.istockphoto.com (the source of the girl) or www.sxc.hu. Just be sure to follow the rights of use and distribution before displaying your art.

20 Blur the flowers

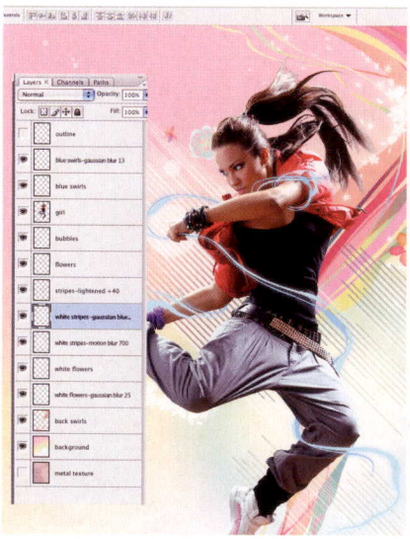
In Photoshop, select the white flowers layer and create a duplicate layer below. With the duplicate, apply a Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur of 25px. This adds a halo-like glow to the white flowers, making them seem even more magical.



> In Photoshop, apply a Gaussian Blur to the white flowers layer. This adds a halo-like glow to the white flowers, making them seem even more magical

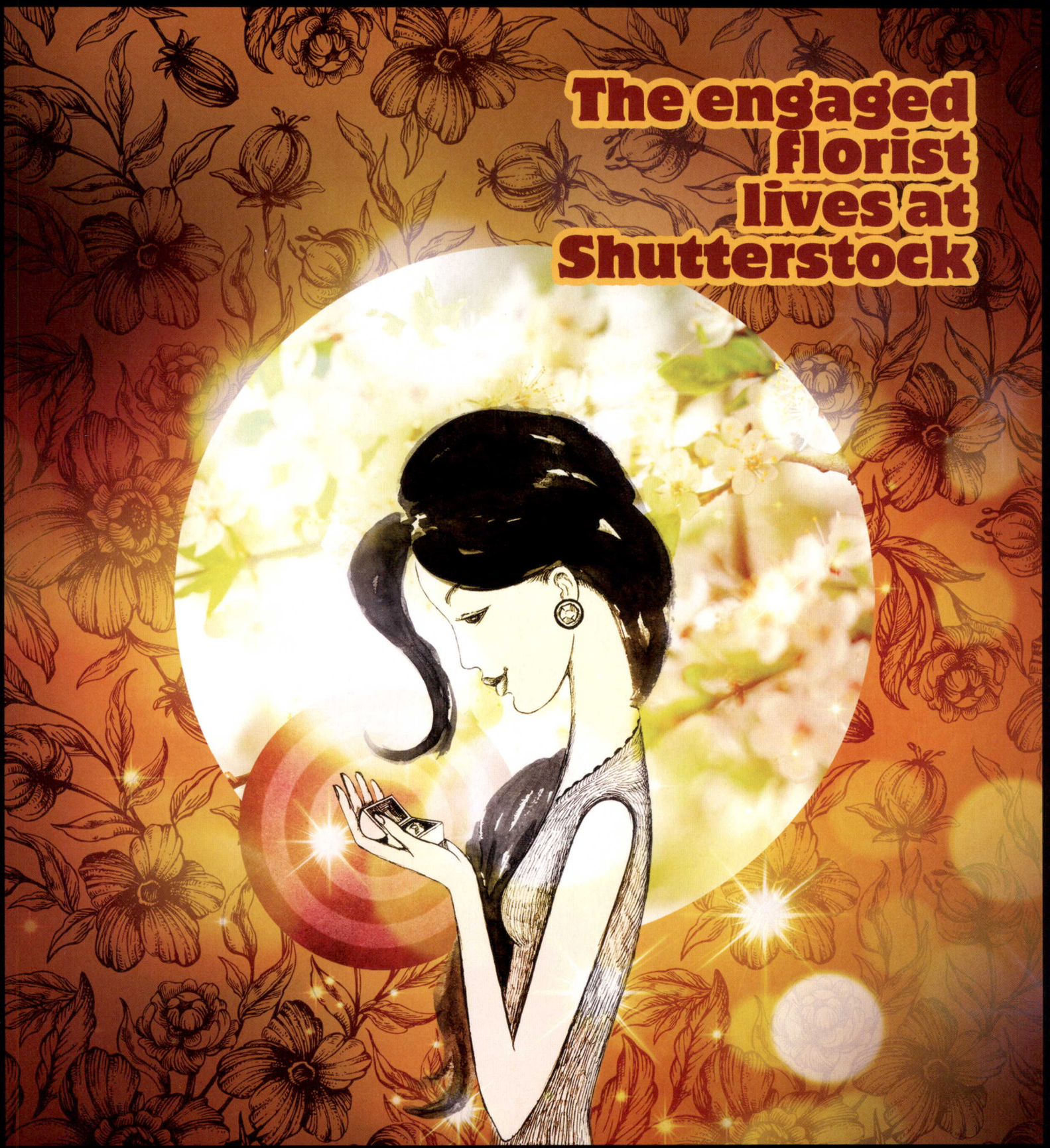
21 More Gaussian Blurs

The Gaussian Blur is also applied to the white stripes layer at 25px (with another duplicate below containing a Motion Blur of -45 degree at 700px) and blue swirls layer at 13px. Also, Hue/Saturation levels (Cmd/Ctrl+U) have been adjusted for the stripes layer by increasing Lightness by 40.



22 Background texture

The last step is to add a subtle texture to the background. First find a texture image – like moss or rusted metal – and open it in Photoshop. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+U to bring up Hue/Saturation, and adjust it until the overall hue is similar to the background layer of the working file. Set the background layer to Multiply and paste the texture layer below it. Voila!



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WORKING WITH COMPLEX SELECTIONS

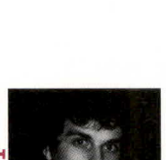
We show you how to manage complex selections and perfect blending techniques to create a colourful montage

In this tutorial you will learn some basic tricks of manipulating photos, adding light effects and shadows, isolating complicated shapes (like smoke) from their background, and building up the composition by duplicating existing fragments and blending them together.

You already should have a good knowledge of Photoshop tools, like the Transformation options and the Gradient tool, and be familiar with managing layers, layer masks and layer blending modes. Using a graphics tablet is undoubtedly helpful, but not necessary.

This tutorial is based on an effect that has already been used in a press ad for a company managing emissions trading – that was the reason for using smoke and bottles, as a representation of their commercial activity. The press ad consisted of five different labelled bottles, all containing colourful smoke. So follow on to learn this proven commercial technique for yourself.

Our expert



Łukasz Mazela
www.pho3nix-bf.deviantart.com/gallery.

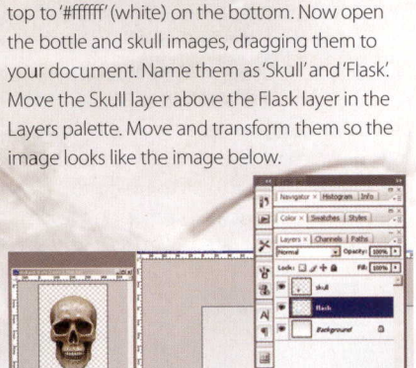
Łukasz is a freelance graphic designer who works on print and web projects from his home in Poland.

Source files

The only images that you need to complete this tutorial are the bottle, smoke and skull. You can use your own resources or download the same ones. The smoke ('2756466') and the skull ('31920880') are from Shutterstock, and the bottle ('6806854') is from Dreamstime.

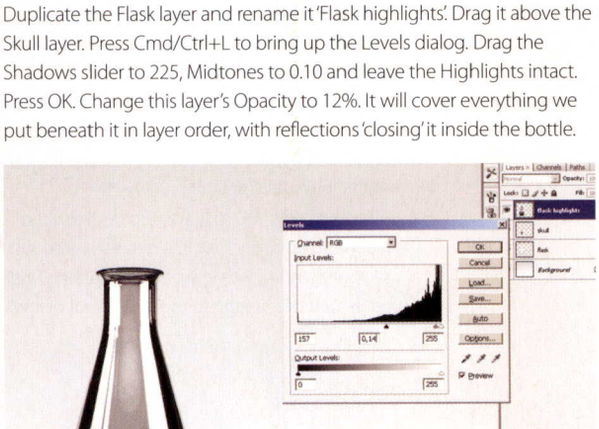
1 Starting it up

Create a new RGB image, size 350mm x 302mm, 300dpi resolution. Fill the background with a Linear gradient, from '#d6d6d6' (grey) on top to '#ffffff' (white) on the bottom. Now open the bottle and skull images, dragging them to your document. Name them as 'Skull' and 'Flask'. Move the Skull layer above the Flask layer in the Layers palette. Move and transform them so the image looks like the image below.



2 Flask highlights

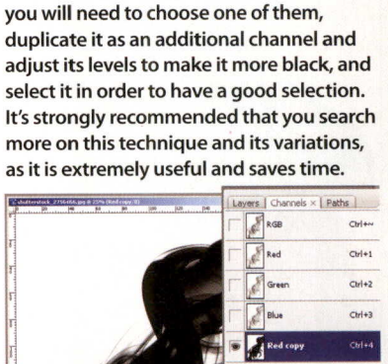
Select the Flask layer and go to Image>Adjustments>Desaturate. Duplicate the Flask layer and rename it 'Flask highlights'. Drag it above the Skull layer. Press Cmd/Ctrl+L to bring up the Levels dialog. Drag the Shadows slider to 225, Midtones to 0.10 and leave the Highlights intact. Press OK. Change this layer's Opacity to 12%. It will cover everything we put beneath it in layer order, with reflections 'closing' it inside the bottle.



> In this tutorial we use the Channels palette to cut out the smoke from the uniform background. In short, this technique is based on finding the channel covering the most elements

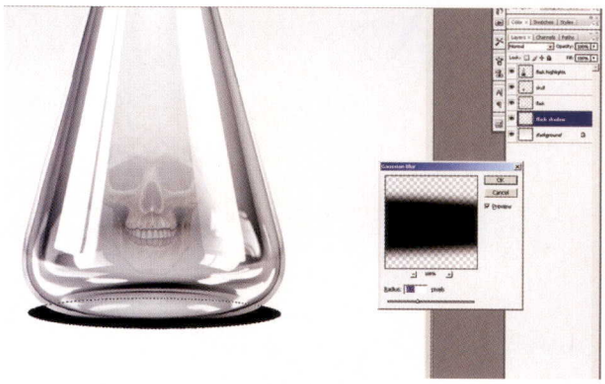
Cut out objects with the Channels palette

In this tutorial we use the Channels palette to cut out the smoke from the uniform background. In short, this technique is based on finding the channel covering the most elements (the most black channel preview), selecting it, and using Selection to cut out an object. In our example all the channels were alike, but most of the time you will need to choose one of them, duplicate it as an additional channel and adjust its levels to make it more black, and select it in order to have a good selection. It's strongly recommended that you search more on this technique and its variations, as it is extremely useful and saves time.



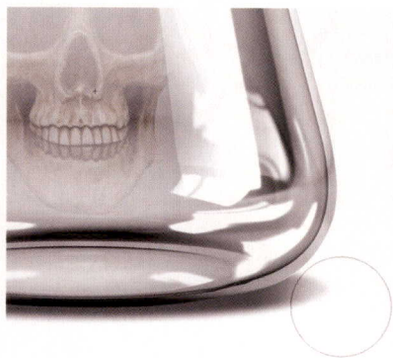
3 Adding shadows

Create a new layer beneath the Flask layer. Name it 'Flask shadow'. With the Elliptical Marquee tool, draw an oval shape to simulate the bottle's shadow. Cmd/Ctrl+D to deselect it. Go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur with an 8px Radius. Set the blending mode to Multiply and the Opacity to 70%. Set the Skull layer to Overlay mode to dim it for the time being, so it's not disturbing you until you need it again.



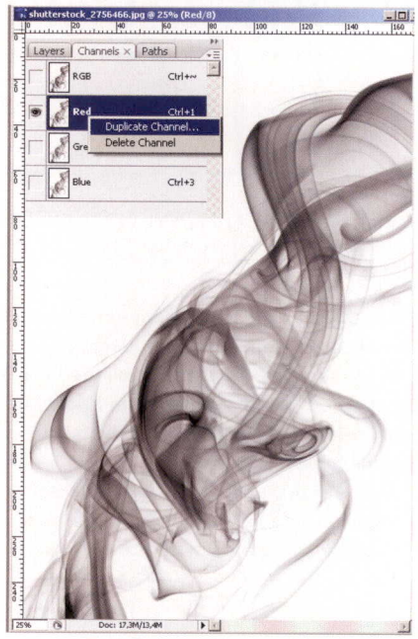
4 Detailing shadow

Apply a layer mask to the Flask shadow layer (Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All). With a soft-edged black brush (Size = 300, Opacity = 30%), mask out a bit of the left and right edges of the shadow with a couple of mouse clicks in order to soften them.



5 Cutting out the smoke

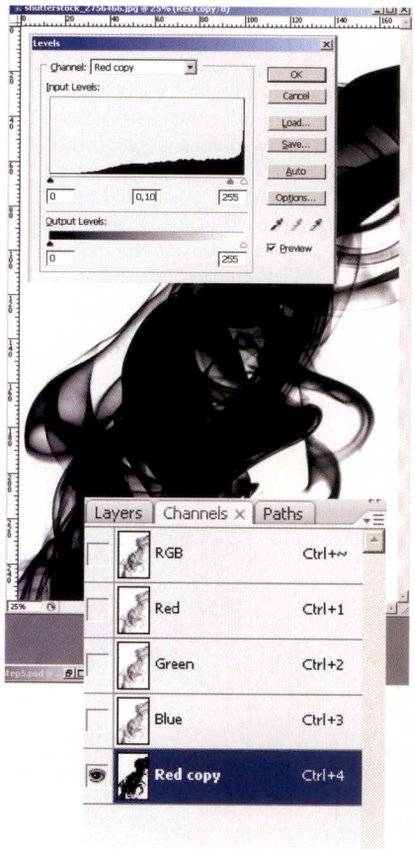
Open the smoke image and Desaturate it (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+U), as we don't want those colours. Go to the Channels palette and select the Red channel by simply clicking on it. Ctrl/right-click and choose Duplicate Channel, then confirm. Now enable the newly created 'Red copy' channel and disable the original Red one.



6 More smoke effects

Press Cmd/Ctrl+L to bring up the Levels palette and move the Midtones slider to 0.10. Hold Cmd/Ctrl and click on the Red copy channel to select it. Inverse the selection with Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I, then click on the RGB channel. Go back to your Layers palette and copy and paste the selection you just made. This creates a new layer with your smoke cut out. Move it below the Flask highlights layer in the Layers palette. Name it 'Smoke' and select it.

> Remember that you can swap the brush colour to white in order to unmask smoke back if you feel that you overdid it

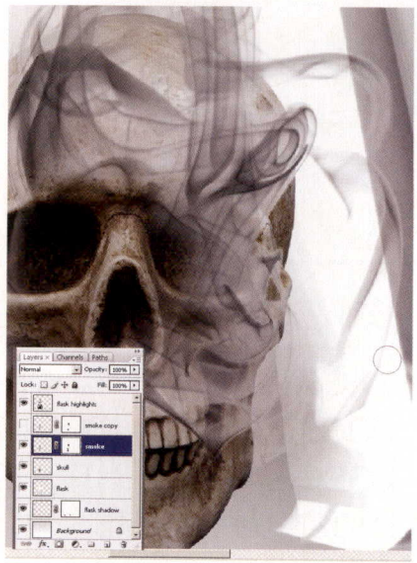


7 Now the tricky part starts...

Press Cmd/Ctrl+T to transform the smoke, rotating it -30°, sizing it down to 40% and moving it to the middle of the bottle. We need to remove the hard edges, so apply a layer mask. Zoom in and, with a soft-edged black brush (Size = 300, Opacity = 100%), mask away the unwanted parts. You may want to decrease the brush size or opacity for more detailed work. Just use your common sense. Continue masking until you get a similar image to the screenshot below.

8 Smoking skull

Now, change the Skull layer's blending mode back to Normal. Zoom in to 100% view. Continue masking the smoke with a soft black brush (Size = 50, Opacity = 20%), and start revealing parts of the skull with single spot clicks. Change the brush settings as you like and make sure you experiment; remember that you can swap the brush colour to white in order to unmask smoke back if you feel that you overdid it with your single spot clicks.

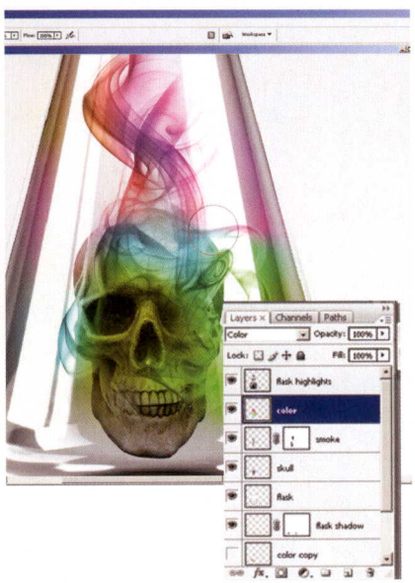


Quick tip

Build up your own image resource library of things like industrial landscapes or smoke spewing from a chimney as they will work great in projects like this one.

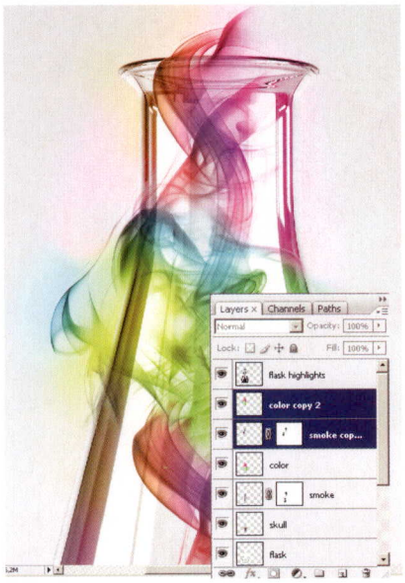
9 Colouring the smoke

Create a new layer, name it 'Colour', and set its blending mode to Color. With a soft-edged brush around 250px in size, start painting with any colours you like. Try to keep within the bottle's area. Change colour and paint over already-filled areas with lowered Opacity (30% works fine). You may also try erasing colour with the Eraser (soft brush, low Opacity of around 30%).



10 More smoke

Select the Smoke and Colour layers and Ctrl/right-click on either of them, choosing Duplicate Layers. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T for Transform and move those layers up, rotating 17° degrees and downsizing to 85%. Try finding some smoke curves on the duplicated layer that will follow the lines on the old one, match it and place the transformation. Now let's go back to masking…

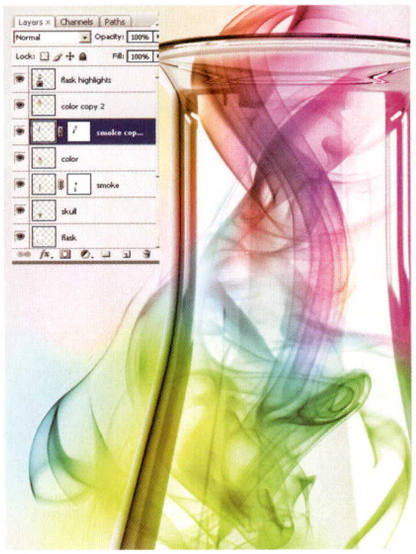


Quick tip

Why not try these smoke effects in wine glasses or vases for a softer look? It's a great effect for advertising imagery or poster work.

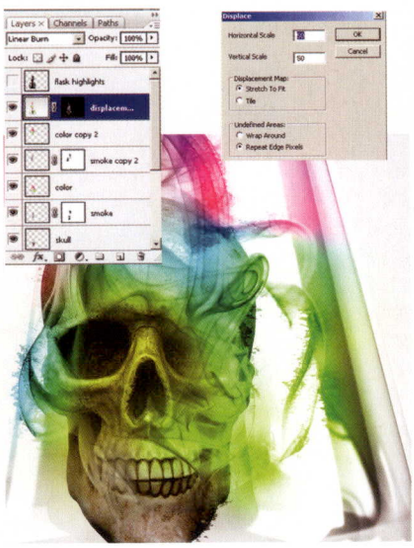
11 Blending the smoke parts together

Redo steps 8 and 9 by colouring the duplicated Colour layer, so it matches more with the image. For the Smoke layer, unmask the area where the skull was. With a small brush, mask the top edge of the bottle, revealing it. Don't stop doing these two steps until you are satisfied with the result. You may want to use a Liquify filter with Twisting Brush, to add more differences to the smoke.



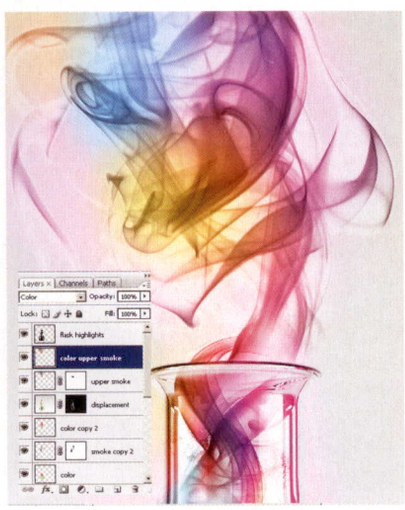
12 Displaced details

Disable the layer, press Cmd/Ctrl+A to Select All, then go to Edit>Copy Merged. Paste the merged image and rename it to 'Displaced'. Download the following file from Shutterstock (or similar): '2332395'. Go to Filters>Distort>Displace, typing 50 in both Scales and checking 'Stretch to fit' and 'Repeat Edge Pixels'. In the pop-up menu, choose a the displacement file that you just downloaded Set the blending mode to Linear and mask the layer (Layer>Layer Mask>Hide All). With a soft brush at 30% Opacity, using a white colour, reveal some details.



13 Upper part of the smoke

Now it's just redoing steps 5 and 6 (cutting out the smoke) and transforming/flipping and downsizing the new smoke layers so that some of its bottom lines match with lines of smoke beneath. Decrease the upper part of the Smoke layer's Opacity to 80%. Mask unwanted parts and colour like you did before. To clip the Color layer with the Smoke layer to prevent the colour affecting the background, select the Color layer and move your cursor over the border between the two layers while holding the Opt/Alt key. When the cursor changes, press the left mouse button.



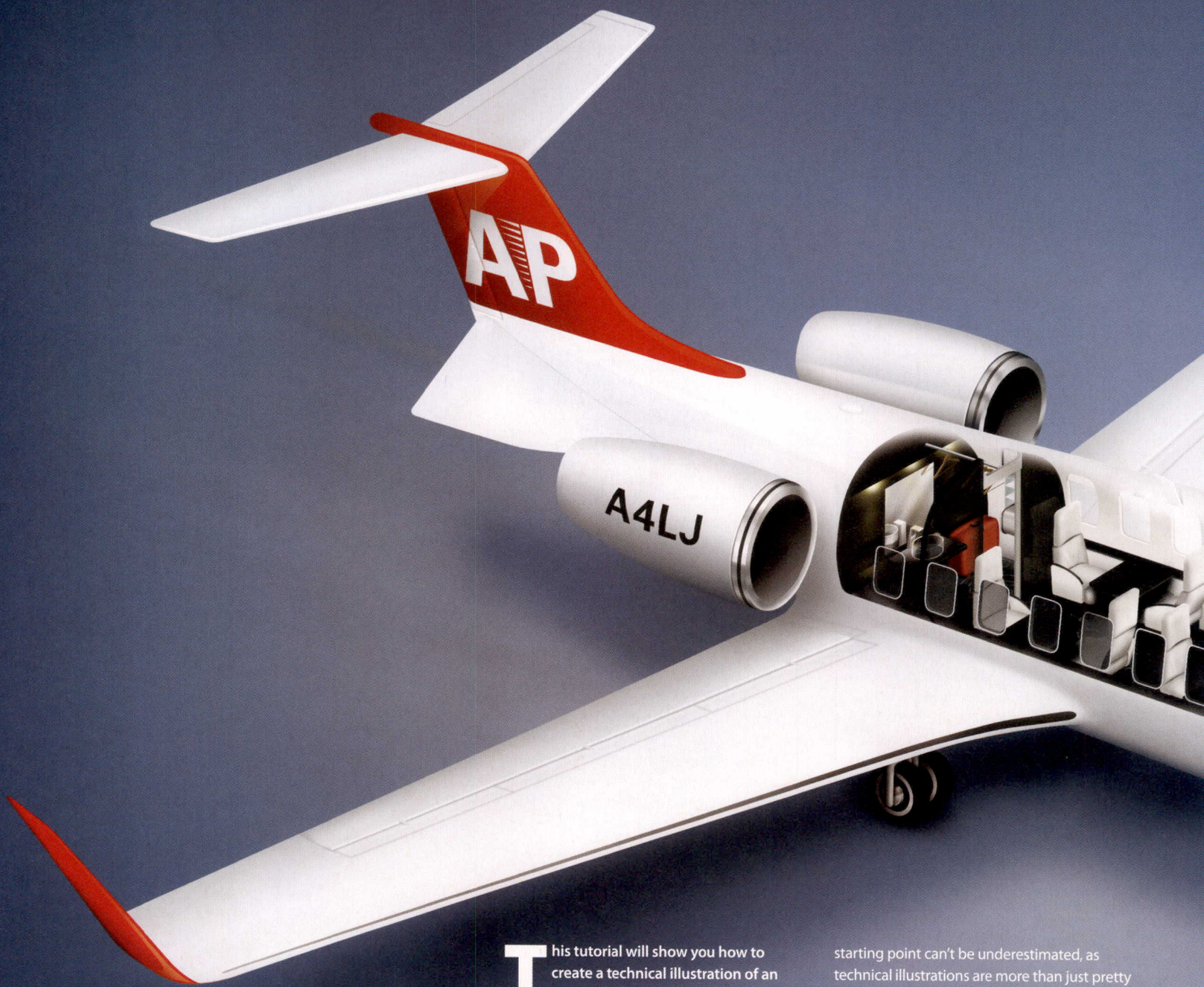
14 Building it up your way

From this point it's up to you to decide how to finish up the piece. We decided to duplicate a bit more smoke in the bottom part of the bottle and add a shadow for a skull. We have also added some tiny white sparkles (done with single white brush dots) and filled up the background with steam cut, and masked in the same manner as we did with smoke. Just play with it and have fun!

Tutorial

TECHNICAL ILLUSTRATION

Learn this advanced Photoshop skill with help from a professional



This tutorial will show you how to create a technical illustration of an executive jet aeroplane with a ghosted cutaway effect. Every technical illustration should start with good planning – from the start you will need to decide what information the illustration needs to convey and how best to achieve this. For this Workshop we will be creating a ghosted effect so you can see through the jet to the interior detail inside.

The importance of being able to create an accurate drawing that gives you a good starting point can't be underestimated, as technical illustrations are more than just pretty pictures – they need to be technically accurate, and learning how to create two- or three-point perspective drawing can greatly aid this. Good reference material is critical in achieving accuracy and a finely detailed finish.

Although it is possible for the image created in this step-by-step walkthrough to be created using a mouse, a graphics tablet is indispensable, as it allows for greater control over the colour that you lay down, resulting in beautifully smooth shading.

Our expert

Andrew Jackson
www.jacksonillustration.com

Andy has been creating freelance illustration for over ten years, specialising in high-quality technical illustration for clients including the Oxford University Press.

Source files

Included on the CD are all the files you will need, including the 'Background.tif' file and paths.

> A technical illustration has to be accurate, as people rely on its information, so quality references are essential

Learn to use the Path tool

The Path tool is your best friend when creating complex technical illustrations. Traditional airbrush artists used masking film and a scalpel to create masks to achieve the clean finish expected of a technical illustration – we use paths to make our selections that act as masks. Why paths rather than alpha channels? With every alpha channel you add, you are increasing the file size, which can slow things down – especially when you have lots of channels – whereas paths add very little to the file size.

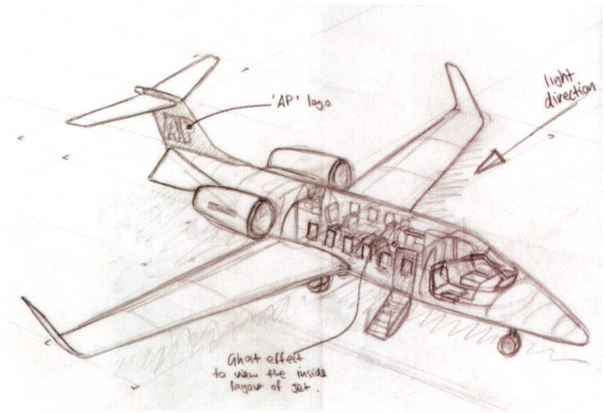
1 Planning

Any technical illustration has to be accurate, as people rely on the information conveyed, so high-quality reference material is essential. If your client isn't going to supply the information then you will need to find this yourself – thank goodness for the internet!

Tutorial

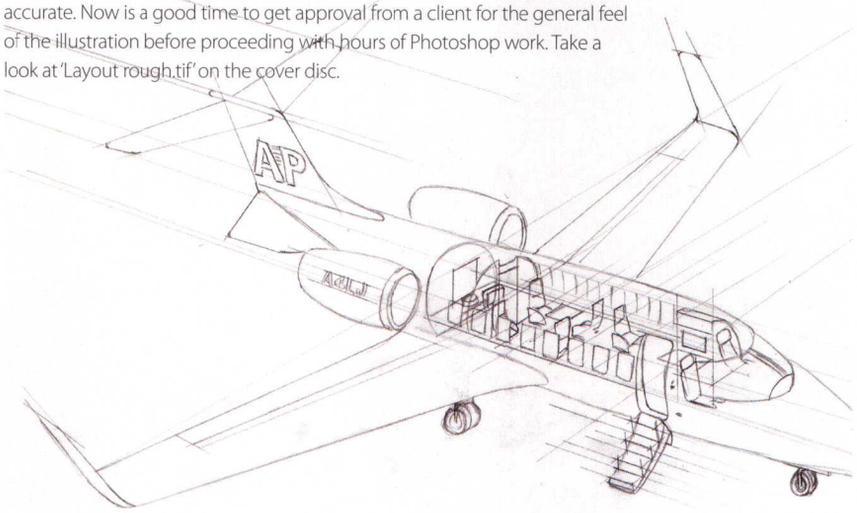
2 Decide on the message

The first step in creating the illustration is prioritising what information needs to be shown. In this illustration we need to show the interior of an executive jet for use in an educational book. We will illustrate the jet as though we're looking down from above so the viewer can look right inside the aeroplane.



3 An accurate starting point

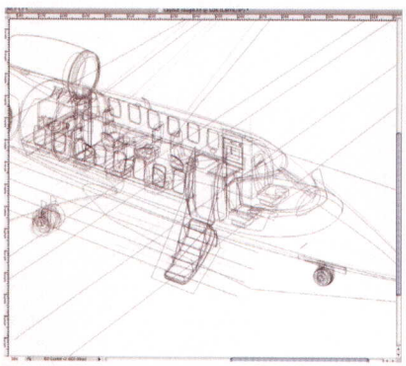
Every technical illustration starts with an accurate pencil sketch. Here, we have used a two-point perspective grid to ensure everything looks accurate. Now is a good time to get approval from a client for the general feel of the illustration before proceeding with hours of Photoshop work. Take a look at 'Layout rough.tif' on the cover disc.



> The first step in creating the illustration is prioritising what information needs to be shown. In this illustration we need to show the interior of an executive jet

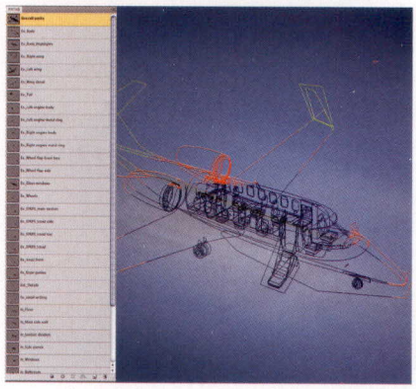
4 Create the paths

Open the file 'Layout rough.tif' in Photoshop. Start by creating two paths that go to the vanishing points and then start to add more paths to build up the image. As you create paths, make sure you give them recognisable names so it's easier later on when using them to make selections.



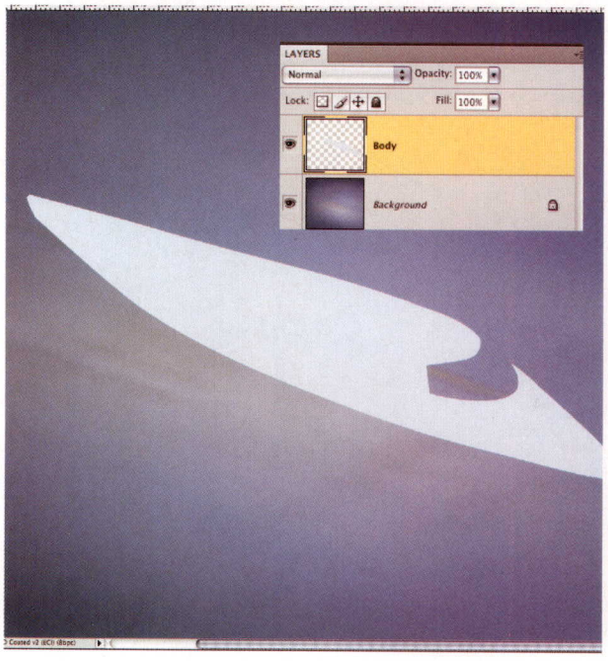
5 Add a background

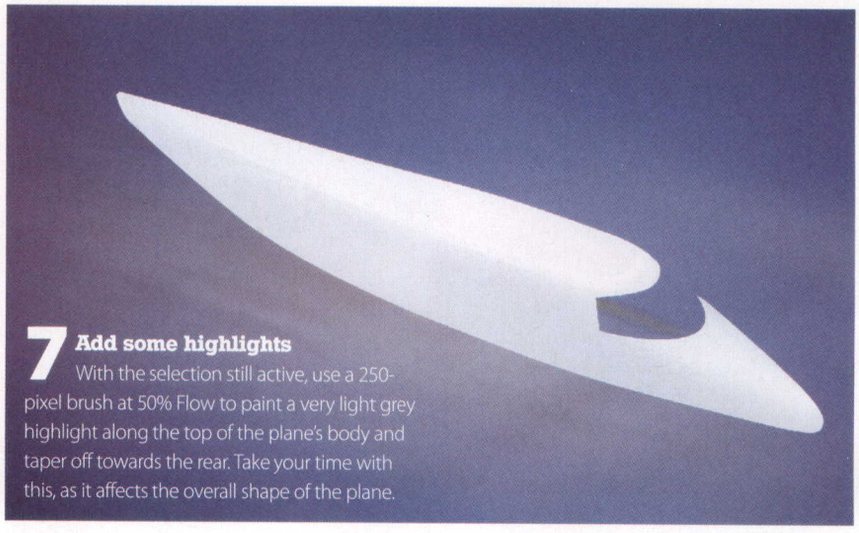
Once the paths have been created, we can start creating the image. Open the supplied background file ('Background.tif'). This file contains the background image plus all the paths needed for this Workshop in case you'd rather not create them yourself, as it takes a fair amount of time.



6 Create the plane's body

First we are going to create the plane's body. Create a new layer called 'Body' and use the path called Ex_Body to make a selection, filling this with a medium grey colour. Before we start adding shape to the body, we need to decide where the light source will be. In this case, it will be lit from above.

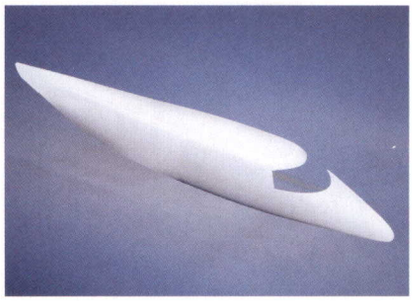




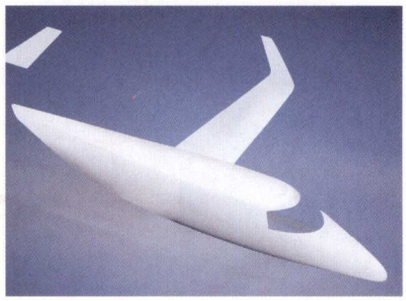
7 Add some highlights

With the selection still active, use a 250-pixel brush at 50% Flow to paint a very light grey highlight along the top of the plane's body and taper off towards the rear. Take your time with this, as it affects the overall shape of the plane.

8 **Give the body some shape**
The plane is now starting to get a bit of shape to it. Using a 400-pixel brush, add a gentle shadow along the bottom edge. This needs to be a slightly darker grey, with a bit of blue added to reflect the blue background that the plane sits on. Also, add a small amount of shading where the cockpit window bends around.

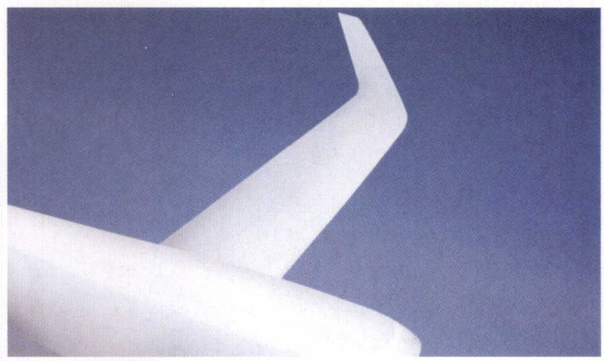


9 **The right wing and tail**
Create a new layer called 'Right wing' below the Body layer. Load as a selection with the Right wing path, filling with the same medium grey used for the plane's body. With a 400-pixel brush at 5% Flow, paint a broad highlight along the front edge of the wing. This starts to give the wing its shape.



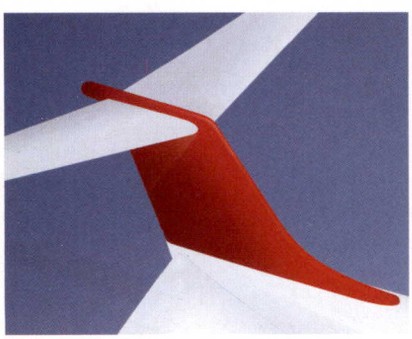
> As you create paths, give them recognisable names so it's easier when using them to make selections

10 **Add more shape to the wings**
Along the rear of the wing, paint in a gentle shadow using a 250-pixel brush with a low Flow value to subtly build up colour. The front of the wing should have a small blueish grey shadow under the edge to show that it curves around. Create a new layer called 'Left wing' above the Body layer, and repeat for the left wing.

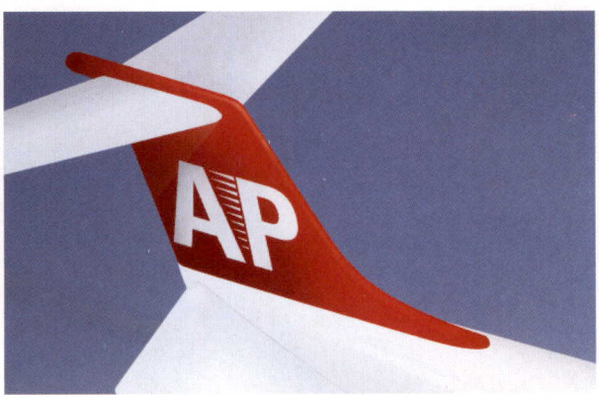


11 **Create the tail fin**
Select the Body layer and create a selection using the Tail path for the red section. Fill with a nice medium red. The tail looks flat at the moment so we will need to use some shadows and highlights to give it some shape. Selecting a darker red, gradate the medium red to the darker red towards the rear of the tail.

12 **Add some glossy red paint**
To make the tail look nice and glossy, we need to add some highlights and a reflection. Using the thin highlights path, make a selection and paint a medium-strength highlight along the front edge of the tail, getting weaker as it goes to the rear. Create a new selection under the tail wing and paint in a light grey reflection.



13 **Add a logo**
Now we need to add the tail logo. Select the path called AP Logo and press Cmd/Ctrl+T to bring up the Transformation tool. Next, hold down Cmd/Ctrl and drag the corner handles to distort the logo into the correct shape. Load as a selection and then fill with a light grey to white gradation.



Mix 'n' match selections

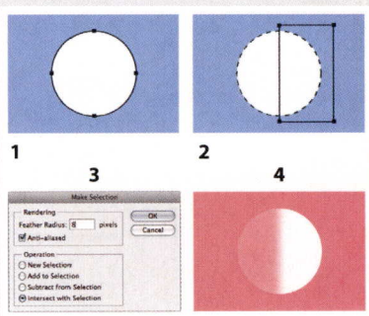
Sometimes you will want selections to include some parts with hard edges and other parts with a soft edge. A selection made from a path by default will have a hard edge. If you hold down Opt/Alt and hit the Make Selection button at the bottom of the Paths palette, it will bring up options for making your selection.

1: Make a selection from the circle path with a Feather setting of 0.

2: Select the rectangle that we want to have a soft edge.

3: Opt/Alt+Make Selection. Enter a Feather Radius of 8 and click Intersect.

4: The resulting selection will have a hard outer edge and a soft vertical edge (shown here in Quick Mask mode).

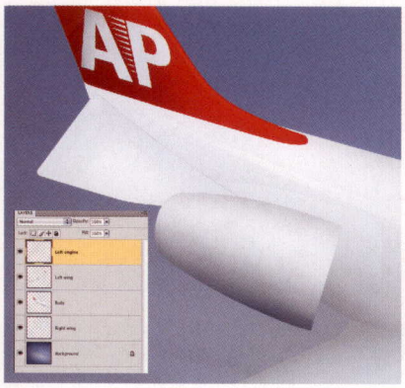


14 Red wing tips

Select the wing tips and fill with a medium red. Paint a lighter red along the front of the wing tip and shadow towards the rear. Keep an eye on where the highlights and shadows should fall. Make a selection from the thin highlight path and paint in a nice glossy highlight to add depth.

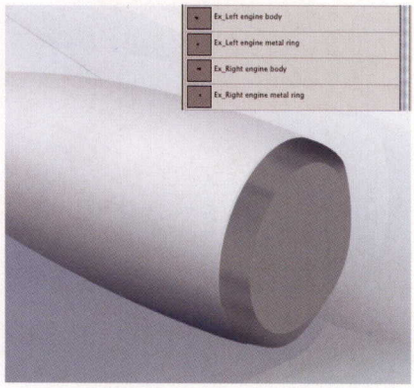
15 Start creating the engines

Create a new layer called 'Left engine' at the top of your layer stack. Load as a selection the main engine body and fill with the same medium grey used on the main body. Using a 150-pixel brush, add a highlight along the top and a shadow along the bottom, remembering to follow the curve of the engine.



16 Add some reflections

Next up, you need to create a selection using the Ex_Left engine metal ring path. Now fill this with a light to medium grey, and then brush in varying darker grey stripes. Create these using a hard-edged brush, and others using softer brushes. These represent the reflections in the chrome.



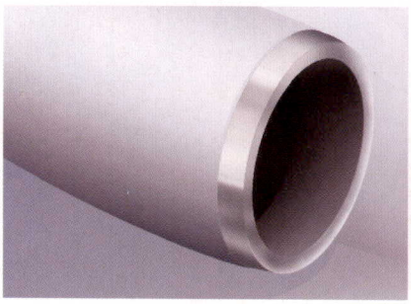
> It's the small details that really make this kind of illustration. Continue to keep an eye on where the highlights and shadows should fall

17 Now for highlights

Now add some bright, almost white highlights using the same technique used for the dark reflections. Add these mainly along the top half of the engine, as these represent the light source reflecting on the metal. Currently, it may look a bit odd but it all comes together when we add the front section.

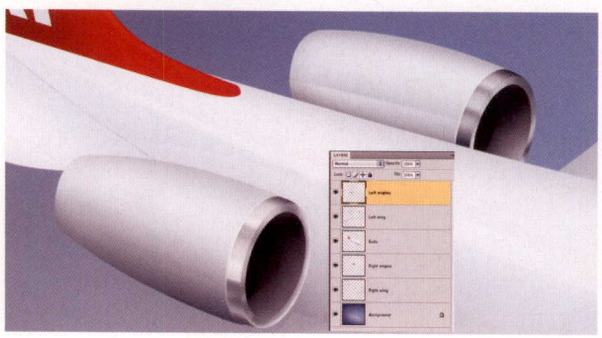
18 Almost there...

Create a selection for the front of the chrome and fill with a gradation from a light to medium grey through to a dark grey. Next, add the reflections and shadow as in the last two steps, except this time make them appear to radiate from the centre of the engine. Select the middle of the engine and fill with a dark grey.



19 Repeat for the right engine

Create a new layer below the Body layer and, using the technique learnt in the last four steps, create the right engine. We also need to add the reflection of the plane's body in this engine. Create a selection for the reflection and, using the Color Picker tool, sample a medium grey from the plane's body, then brush in a reflection using an 80-pixel brush set to 15% Flow.

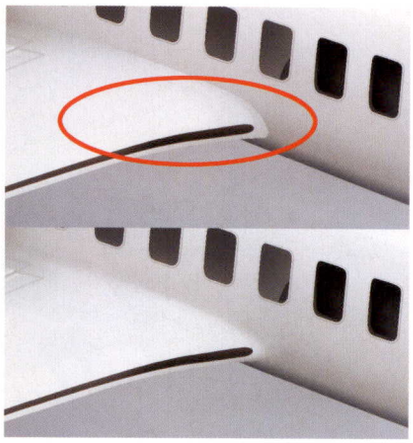


20 Add the smaller details

It's the small details that really make this kind of illustration. Use the paths on path Ex_ details to create selections and use the brush to paint in the smaller details. Remember to continue to keep an eye on where the highlights and shadows should fall.

21 Everything looking good?

The plane is looking really good now. Check that the highlights and shadows look realistic and, if necessary, go back and adjust these to get the correct shape. Here, we have gone back in and adjusted the way the wings blend in with the body by colour-picking from surrounding areas, and we used the Brush tool to blend the two areas together.

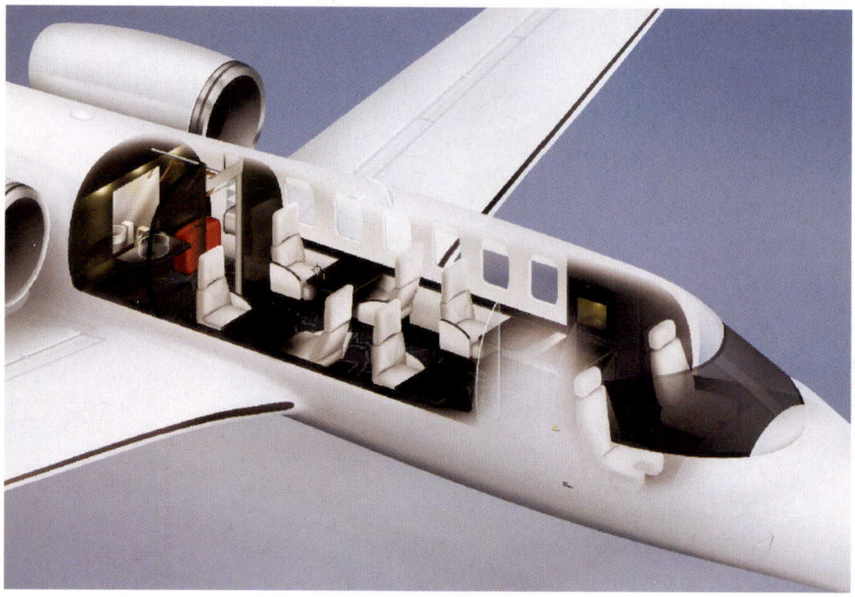


22 Organise the layers

Highlight all the layers created so far and group into a layer group (Cmd/Ctrl+G), renaming the group 'External'. Open 'Interior.tif' and drag it across to your main document. In the Layers palette, drag it under the External layer group you've just created.

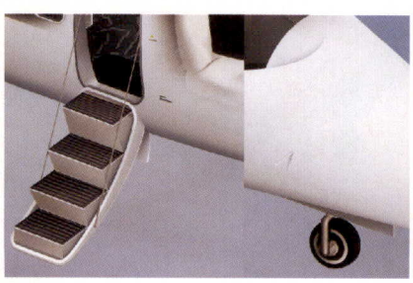
23 Create a ghost effect

Next, select the External layer group and add a layer mask. Using a 125-pixel brush at 30% Flow, start to brush away the external image. We need to achieve a soft transition, as we want to be able to see through the plane.



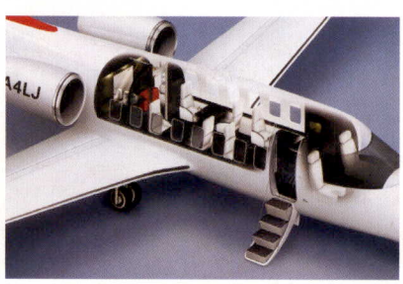
25 Wheels and steps

All that is left to do now is add the steps and wheels. The interior, steps and wheels were all created in the same way as the exterior of the plane, using the paths to create selections and then airbrushing in the detail.



26 Add the shadow

Create a new layer between the Background and Interior layers and, using a 400-pixel brush with dark blue, paint in the shadow of the jet. Using a smaller 100-pixel brush and darker colour, add shadows under the wheels and door.

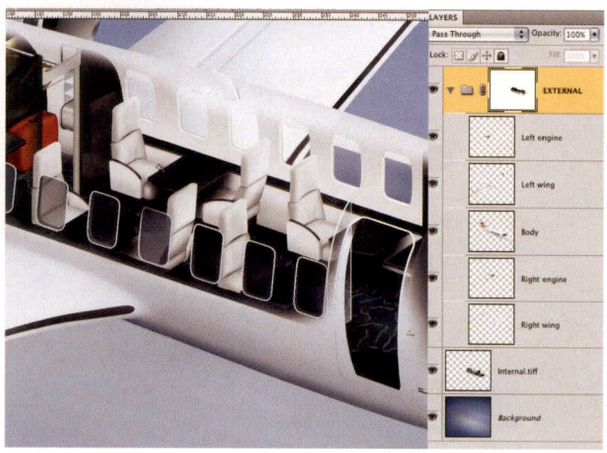


Creating a traditional cutaway

It is easy to transform this illustration into a traditional cutaway. Complete the walkthrough up to Step 23. Using the Pen tool, create a path where you want to cut away the jet's outer body to see into the interior, following the natural shape of the body where possible. Create a selection from the path and invert the selection. Select the External layer group and apply a layer mask. On a new layer, add a red stroke to your selection and you will have a traditional cutaway image.

24 Add some windows and a door

The side windows have disappeared during the ghosting process, so use the Windows path to select these and fill with a white Fill so they become visible again. Do the same for the door: select the Door path and fill with a 100% black Fill to mask out the door so the interior shows through.



> The interior, steps and wheels were all created in the same way as the exterior of the plane, using the paths to create selections and then airbrushing in the detail

CREATIVE
TV

Learn how the pros create bespoke fonts and stunning special effects

Typographers have always been in the business of arranging type and modifying glyphs. Subtle yet sophisticated examples are consistently deployed on a daily basis in both print and web-based media. However, it seems time for a type revolution, with the new kids on the block turning the creative axis towards more ornate design solutions – blowing off the dust of traditional, starchy styles and rejuvenating this art form. This said, rather than dismissing such conventional techniques, modern

FEAR: "Typographic headline treatment for *Wired* magazine. This was created out of exploding chilled glass stock," Sean Freeman tells us *© Sean Freeman*

digital designers are amalgamating all disciplines into new workflows and producing awe-inspiring graphic solutions. It's said that 'a picture speaks a thousand words'. But what if that picture is a word? The face of typography has changed – boundaries are well and truly blurred, if not obliterated.

In this feature we'll be speaking to some of the industry's pioneering graphic typographers, who share some of their own Photoshop and digital software creative tips and tricks. We'll also discuss how successful commercial styles and artist's ideals are aligning – if at all – and discover the fine margin between success and failure when going pro. We'll also present some of the more influential design examples out there to digest, as well as show you where to go to promote and get inspired about all things typographic. This isn't just typography, it's typographic art and it's going to be a big design trend in 2010.

LEGIBILITY OVER LAVISH DESIGN?

When approaching any typographic project there are both general and personal rules that artists will apply, affecting the delivery of their own style. However, all our artists agree that legibility is fundamental. Graphic designer Emeric Trahand (**www.stillontherun.com**) explains: "If clients hire an illustrator or designer to create an exuberant piece they also need it to be readable. A balance has to be found between the graphic density and the purpose served by the work."

Here it becomes apparent that modern illustrators and designers must not over-elaborate modern bespoke styles to the point of distraction. This is harder said than done, with 3D packages and Photoshop giving birth to a common trend of lavish and expressive styles. Type designer Sean Freeman (**www.thereis.co.uk**) explains: "For typographers, beautifully set type can be seen as a work of art, whereas audiences may gloss over it as just words.

"A balance has to be found between the graphic density and the purpose served by the work."
– Emeric Trahand

Creating Elektrotrash: A found art typeface

*Alex Varanese (**www.alexvaranese.com**) reveals how to build fonts using 3D and Photoshop*

STEP 1: Letterforms

"I begin in Illustrator, drawing random, incomplete letterform fragments. Some resemble a traditional serif, while the others will become circuit boards."

STEP 2: First render

"Each fragment is extruded into 3D, setting up the industrial look. Next, that kitschy, found art look is applied with patterns to my serif fragments."

STEP 3: True found art

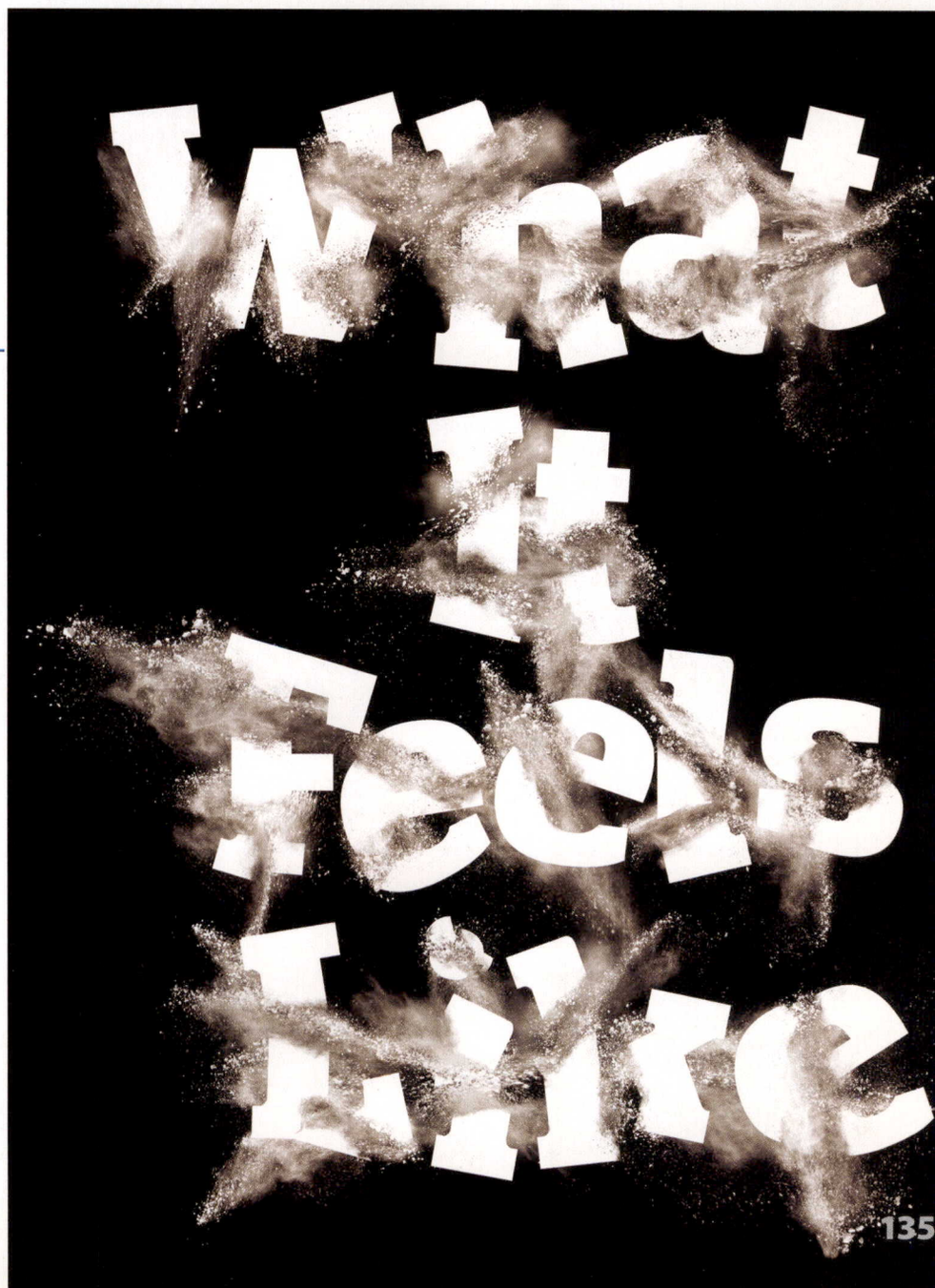
"With circuit board graphics applied to other letters, I incorporate objects made for previous projects. So in a way, it really is 'found art'."

STEP 4: A serious mess

"Serif fragments, circuit boards and found objects are assembled haphazardly, forming letters that reject symmetry."

STEP 5: Complete garbage

"Moody lighting is applied, rendered from above. It still needs some tweaks. Levels adjustments, colour correction and subtle flare effects are added."



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WHAT IT FEELS LIKE: This was a full-page type treatment for *Esquire* magazine, New York, by Sean Freeman © *Sean Freeman*

When the type starts to become an image it does draw you in, being far more engaging with wider audiences." A good example of this is Freeman's *What It Feels Like* image (shown right), commissioned to present movement and energy. Photoshop made it possible to bring this headline to life in a visually rich way. "It's all made up from photographs," he explains. "I shoot lots of different things, spending ages experimenting; cutting out images using channels and alpha masks, applying Screen blending modes on black backgrounds, erasing edges and simple adjustment layers, Curves and Hue/Saturation tweaks."

Digital illustrator Alex Beltechi (**www.behance.net/alexbeltechi**) alternately presents the pitfalls of an ignorant attitude towards digital application: "What many people fail to understand is that perfect knowledge of Photoshop is nothing without talent. The program has allowed typographers to approach new styles and techniques with ease, but has also lead to the butchering of many a font." Traditional

3 **TRUST:** "Personal work that was produced for nothing more than the satisfaction of self-promotion," says Emeric Trahand *© Emeric Trahand*

techniques are not easily forgotten in this contemporary arena, having been adapted by digital technology into something far more aesthetic and less fundamental. Beltechi explains: "There's no watercolour brush like actual watercolour. You can't look old school without actually being old school. At home, I have a drafting table, crayons, markers, pastels and brushes, ink pens, paints – all the things that many emerging illustrators neglect. You can't get accurate, realistic results with an effect without understanding how it works in real life." So it seems that there is a very fine line between subtlety and gratuitousness.

Format is equally as important to comprehend when delivering successful design. This encourages a symbiotic relation between type and background, achieving a perfect visual balance. Sean Freeman reveals: "Often the background in my work is simply black. For me it's really important to have something very detailed or delicate complemented by an unassuming background or setting, allowing the type to be the main focus."

INTEGRATED EFFECTS

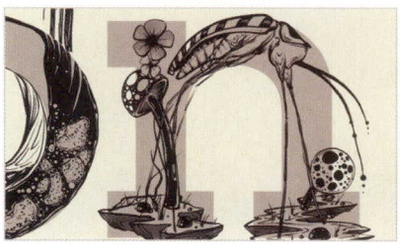
However, there are those creating far more integrated solutions, as Beltechi admits: "I'd say creating a setting or environment for your typography could make a big difference. There's an increasing number of realistic

Bespoke effects

*David Waters (**www.ishbu.com**) takes us through the creative process for BFA Thesis Exhibit poster, 2009*

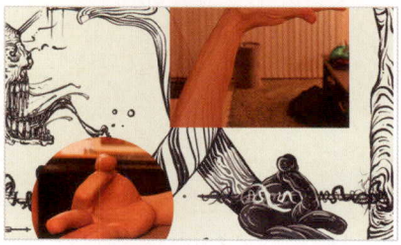
STEP 1: Don't go outside the lines

"It's important to realise that you'll need to make adjustments to the type, particularly with illustrative styles. The initial type layer should be used for guidelines and organisation."



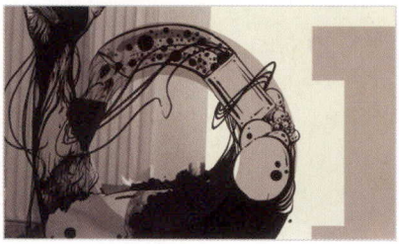
STEP 2: Think outside the box

"Imagine what objects or shapes around you would work well with your type, to fit your concept. I used photographs taken by myself to integrate into my characters."



STEP 3: Start illustrating

"Begin illustrating and merging your photographic objects with the shape of the type. For this illustration, I mostly used the default Round brush with a graphics tablet."



STEP 4: Shape your effects

"For the lines on the letter 'E', I created a grid by duplicating a rectangle. To form these patterns and effects to your characters, go to Edit> Transform>Warp and drag the grid."

4 **CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF THIS:** "A personal experiment, when I realised I just couldn't get enough type," exclaims Alex Beltechi *© Alex Beltechi, 2009*

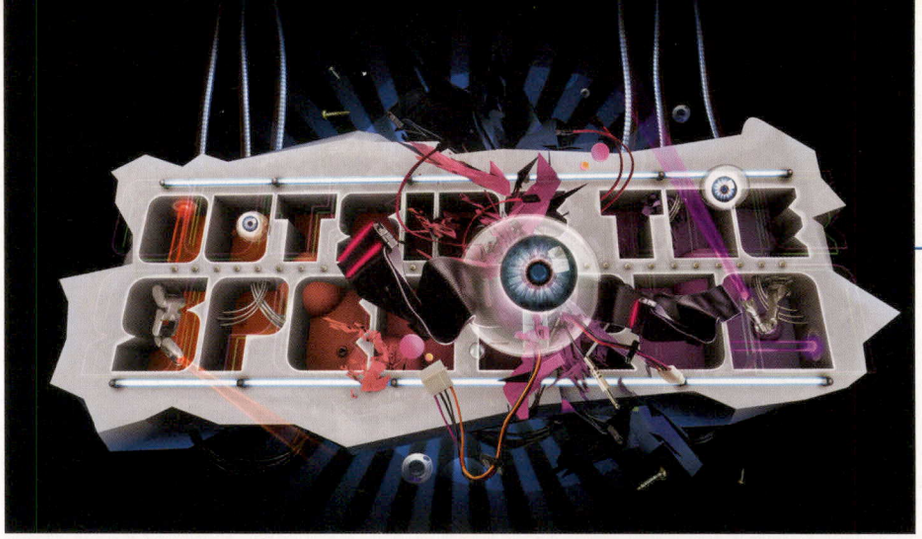
typography examples that are seamlessly blended into photography. I think we'll be seeing a lot more of that." Sean Freeman reiterates: "What helps make contemporary typography dynamic is interaction in some way with its environment. For instance, in a poster where the type is interacting with a product of some description." Emeric Trahand adds: "I feel like previous years have been marked by tons of Si Scott-like (**www.siscottstudio.com**) ornamental styles. Lots of playful 3D letters embedded in colourful graphics too. The next trend is a little more experimental with lots of surprising textures – letters made of hair, smoke or dust, with a variety of mixes and a real will to be different."

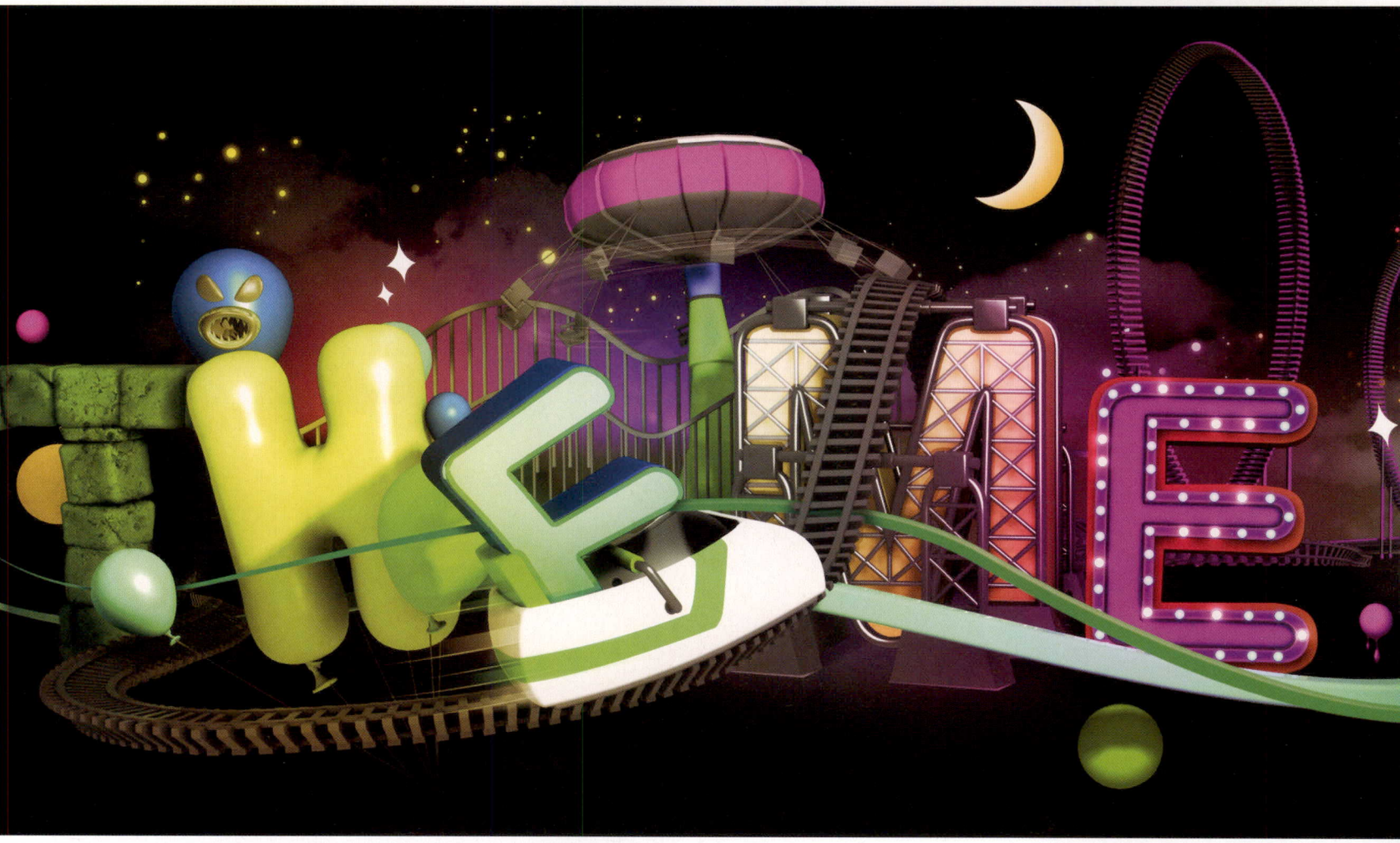
The appeal in bespoke styles soon becomes a paradox, as designer Theo Aartsma (**www.sumeco.net**) tells us: "Graphical concepts become trendy, hyped and abused, then left alone for a while because it's not interesting any more." But surely this is the attractive nature of bespoke typography – for style cycles to be refreshing consistently, ultimately providing some unique and fresh design solutions for audiences and clients alike out of fear of stalemate? Styles are taking all shapes and forms. Special effects vary from elaborate to intricate. Take, for example, Aartsma's very own work, *Theme Park* (over the page). He reveals: "I use Photoshop for detailing the smoky and glittering atmosphere. I use standard soft brushes, applying layer transparency. This gives effects a cleaner look as you have uniformed amounts. Rich colour details are applied with Pen tool selections, creating hard lines. Then I brush the colour I want onto a new layer. It works the same as airbrushing, only I can adjust the colour using Color Overlay blending mode and/or hue saturation settings."

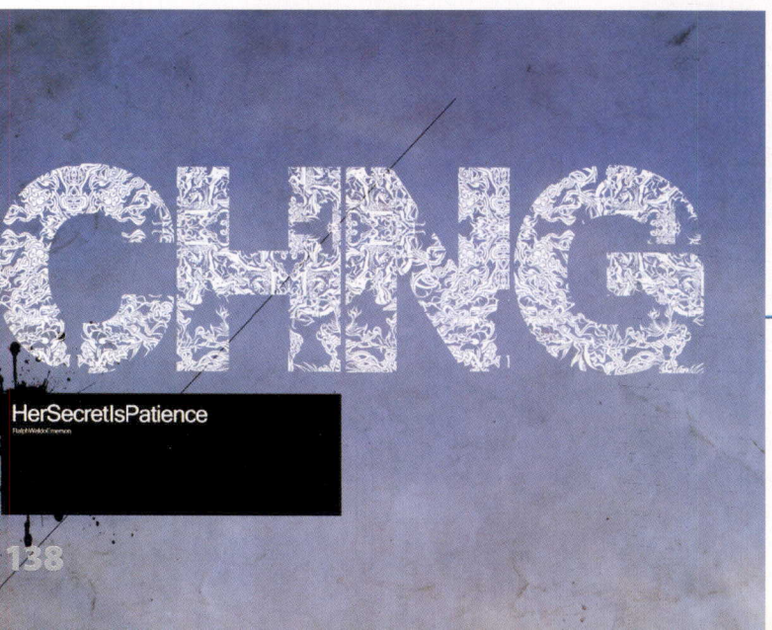
Alex Beltechi believes that these bespoke solutions are groundbreaking, no matter how they are produced: "They're not only impressive art, but they have found their place in the commercial sector as well." However, he warns: "Many people do it, but it doesn't mean that just as many have a dedicated career out of it." Many

"What helps make contemporary typography dynamic is interaction in some way with its environment"
– Sean Freeman

5 **STEAMPUNK TYPE:** "A celebration of the inspiring Steampunk movement – one of my many sources of inspiration," explains Alex Beltechi *© Alex Beltechi, 2009*







6

CHNG: "A personal project, where I used a hand-drawn tribal pattern to create the letter mask," says Theo Aartsma © *Theo Aartsma 2009-2010*

artists feel that traditional print styles are commonly applied, with the design community feeding itself for now with more graphical types.

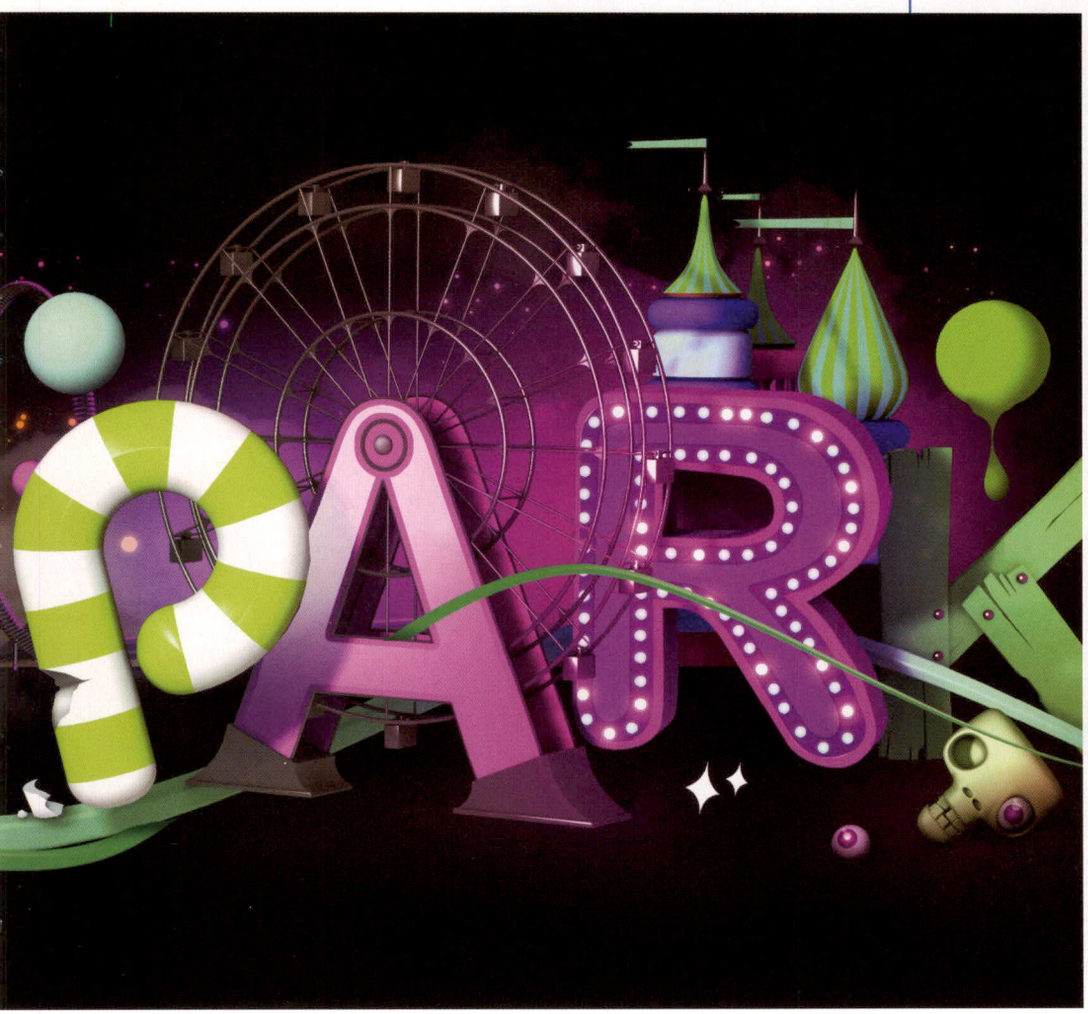
COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

But it seem that others are more encouraging, as Emeric Trahand explains: "The demand is huge in editorial works or advertising – both print and motion. Unfortunately, lots of projects with small budgets can't afford to hire a genuine typographer. That explains why lots of illustrators are developing font skills too, which is in effect an excellent exercise."

Commercial styles fundamentally depend on what they are used for, in turn determining the success of you, the artist. Sean Freeman explains: "Something

7 **OUTSIDE THE SPECTRUM:** Personal study project in combining photomanipulation and 3D typography by Theo Aartsma © *Theo Aartsma 2009-2010*

8 **FREEDOM FESTIVAL: THEME PARK:** "3D typographic illustration for the Australian Freedom dance festival," says Theo Aartsma © *1One design studio 2009*



like masculine sports shoes expect to see big bold solid type. I really love the majority of the typography that Nike uses in its ads; big bold confident type that tends to really fits its purpose. I'm sure Non-Format (**www.non-format.com**) does most of its work that I really like. In fact, it does amazing work full stop. Anyway, it's all about using the right style to talk to the right audience." He adds: "Finding work seems to be a bi-product of getting your work out there and seen. It's also great to decide on what type of work you really want to do, like album covers, ad campaigns, book covers, or what type of work best suits your style."

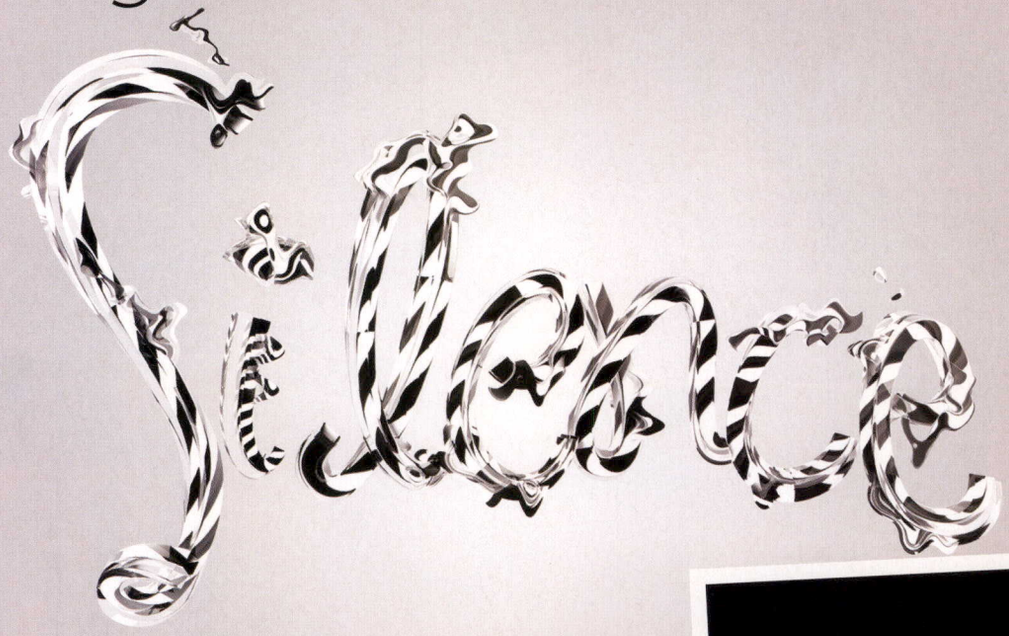
But how do you find work? Our artists agree that the online format serves best. "I think your own portfolio is the strongest promotion you can have on the internet. It's all about trying to get to people there. You can use collectives, blogs and portals like deviantART (**www.deviantart.com**) for this," explains Aartsma. Beltechi puts this into a clearer perspective, as he adds finally: "It all depends on the attention you want to attract. I create digital images and usually get contacted by people who want exactly this. I don't actually have a personal website, but use portfolio sites to promote my work. Services like Behance (**www.behance.net**) or Flickr (**www.flickr.com**) make good platforms, as you get lots of exposure from people that count – people that are in the same line of work." People that appreciate the nature and delivery of lavish bespoke typographic styles. □

Case study: Free Tibet

Designer Pete Harrison talks through the creation of this image

Tibet is a plateau region radicalised by Chinese invasion. A political and social hotbed, its affairs stir strong emotions between global communities. Graphic artist Pete Harrison (**www.aeiko.net**) is an artist with such strong motives, as he explains: "In this piece I have created an abstract type treatment using these meaningful words. It's a colourful yet powerful artwork to demonstrate the campaign. It's about an end to the Chinese occupation of Tibet, and for the fundamental human rights of Tibetans to be respected."

Initial ideas were met with solutions to produce a photomanipulation, but Harrison decided a type piece would be more powerful. "I used a combination of stock photography and the Pen tool to create the type paint effects, then added colour in a variety of ways and some of my signature lighting effects," he explains. "The style worked well for the project – creating the effect I wanted – and it has had a very positive response." The design articulates the message well and has had exposure in the *Designers Against Human Rights Abuse* book, in exhibition and numerous hits across the web. "It's a successful piece because its style made people aware of the cause," he finally adds.



SILENCE: *"I wanted to try something completely different from what I usually do. The text was rendered out from CINEMA 4D and then I added all the dripping organic parts in Photoshop"*

BOOM: *"This render was done in CINEMA 4D and effects were added in Photoshop. Colour corrections, lighting and some shadows had to be drawn up"*

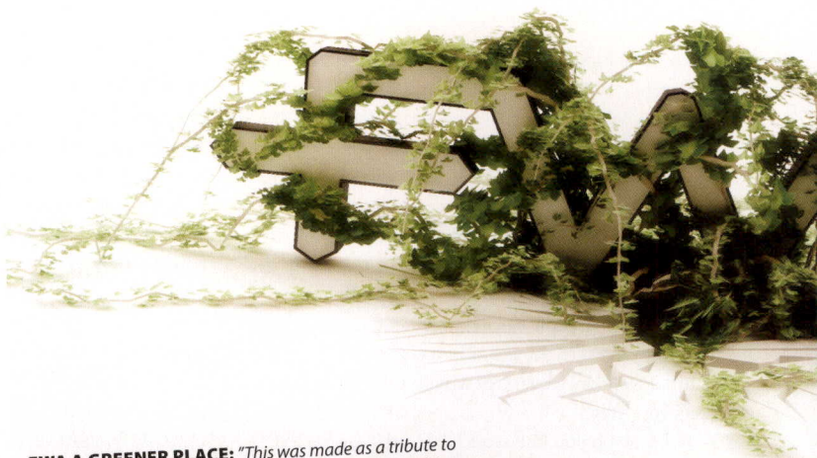
Morten Sølvstrøm

Website: www.solvstrom.com
Exposure: Microsoft, Sony, Kodak

Morten Sølvstrøm (**www.solvstrom.com**) is a new-generation artist who has been heavily inspired by the online art community. Switched on to graphic design by the depthCORE (**www.depthcore.com**) experience, he was immediately hooked. "The interest grew as I started to play around in Photoshop," he explains. "It was great, but also very difficult. I remember a certain episode where I had to call a friend and ask him how to make a simple stroke. I think everybody remembers their first time in Photoshop."

His technical skills have advanced dramatically since. Graduating from the Multimedia Designer Academy, Odense (**http://mmd-odense.dk/**) in 2008, Sølvstrøm progressed to digital ad agency Verticportals (**www.verticportals.com**) as an interactive designer. Here he's picked up a plethora of skills, as he reveals: "I use different techniques all the time. However, I have recently used CINEMA 4D for a lot of 3D renders, because after all I like to do motion graphics as well. I usually render something out in CINEMA 4D, then use Photoshop to do all the colour correction, lighting and small detailing that a 3D app just can't do."

When Sølvstrøm isn't working hard to promote the agency, he's feeding his personal appetites with his own digital styles: "As an interactive designer I have worked with clients such as Microsoft, Sony, Kodak and ECCO. My personal style is changing all the time, however. I always have a project or two fresh in my mind. Just take a look at my website once in a while and I'm sure there'll be something new there." Inspiration comes from his peers: "If I were to mention some of my favourites, I would say Peter Jaworowski, Pawel Nolbert and Justin Maller."



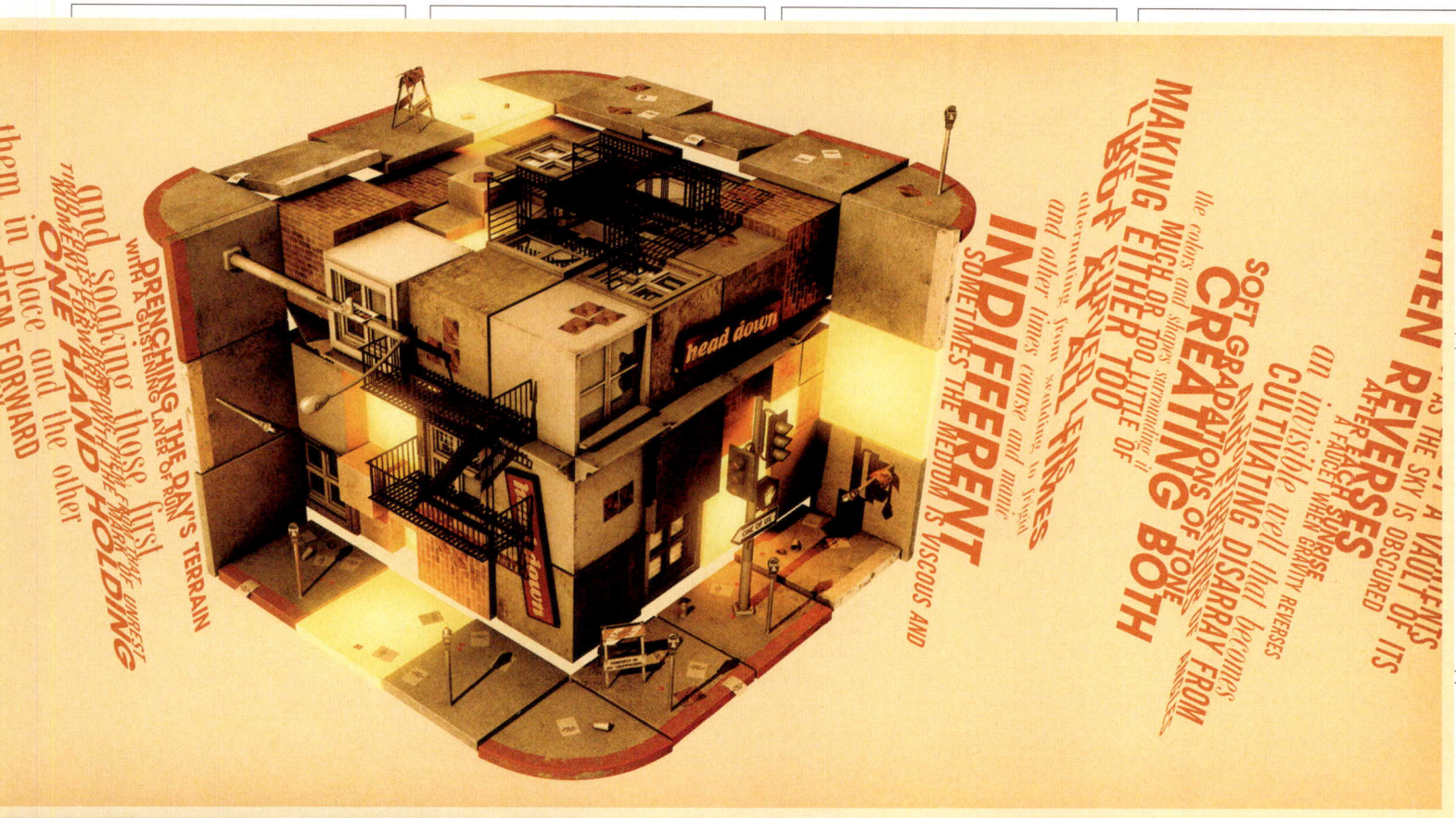
FWA A GREENER PLACE: *"This was made as a tribute to The FWA. There is not much Photoshop work done on this one. It was rendered out from 3ds Max and then I did the colour correction in Photoshop"*

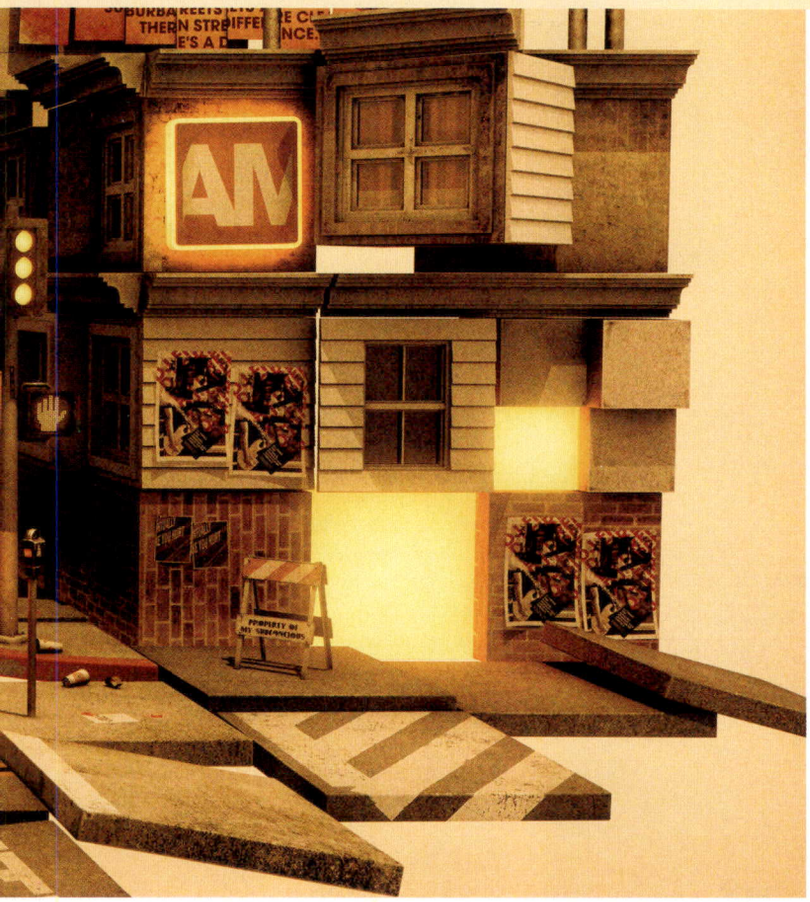
REQUIEM: *"Again a render from CINEMA 4D. This might seem pretty simple, but a lot of the small details were done in Photoshop"*

Insight

ACT THREE: *"More than any other piece in the series, my goal here was to capture the feel of 'found art' digitally, as if I'd found each of these elements in a dumpster and stacked them together"*

OWNERSHIP: *"My Urban Cartography series is all about deconstructing metropolitan environments and cobbling them back together haphazardly. Here, I was going for an Escher-like surrealism"*





THE ONLY ROAD HOME IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION: *"As the final cityscape piece in the Urban Cartography series, I wanted to evoke an open-ended sense of direction. As such, the arrangement of the text mirrors that of the road, drawing the focus to the negative space in the distance"*

Alex Varanese

Website: www.alexvaranese.com
Clients: Roxio, Norton, Nokia

Alex Varanese describes his method of working as schizophrenic, brought on by his eclectic background. He's worked as a videogame developer, a firmware programmer, a copywriter, an animator and a type designer to date. "Fortunately, it's that chaotic spirit that most interests me, so I try to use it to my advantage," says Varanese.

His first commission came about through a friend, when he produced a logo and realised that his interest lay in design. "There weren't any creative restrictions and it had a sense of cultural relevance to it. It helped me realise that a career in design could be about more than making flyers for the local hair salon."

Varanese uses a mixture of software packages to get his unique style and each piece is subjected to the same workflow procedure, as he explains: "My ideas usually start in 3ds Max, where the overall design is established. But it's Photoshop, of course, where everything truly comes together. That's where a collection of disparate elements becomes an actual piece of work, and I finally start seeing the idea as I visualised it to begin with. I tend to render my images in multiple passes and use Photoshop to not only composite them back together but add the effects and processing necessary to bring it all to life: texture, colour correction, depth and lighting effects, etc. It's easy to mistake Photoshop for little more than a way to add polish at the end of the process, but it really is just as integral as the 3D app itself in producing the final piece."

TYPOGRAPHIC EFFECTS

Master this popular commercial style with our in-house type expert's advice

Our expert

Stacey Grove
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Advanced Photoshop's senior designer shows off her typographic skills.

Source files

On the disc you will find a royalty-free resource pack for your personal use, full of water-based images to help you build your own creations.

Typographic artworks are everywhere at the moment (see opening image for our Creative Type feature on page 132 for example). Whether you're creating artwork for fun, or you want to master a popular commercial style, with wide-ranging applications such as promotional posters, this tutorial has plenty to keep you busy.

It's actually not as complex as it looks to create this kind of artwork. The basic text is decorated with various stock images, which are cut out and blended in to suit their environment. Having a strong concept is the key to making this work. Think about what your actual type is going to say, then collect together as many stock images as you can that relate to your theme. This will help direct your artwork and bring it together into a coherent whole.

We have provided some watery stock imagery on the disc, but why not try the tutorial out on your own concepts?

> It's better to choose a sans-serif font so as not to over-complicate the final artwork. Make sure the kerning of your type is even and neatly stacked with room to breathe

Mastering cutouts

There are various ways to cut out objects in Photoshop and we'll be using a variety throughout the course of this tutorial.

One method that we'll use is via the Channels palette. This works well when cutting out water with really soft edges. This technique is based on finding the channel covering the most elements, selecting it and using the selection to cut out the required object.

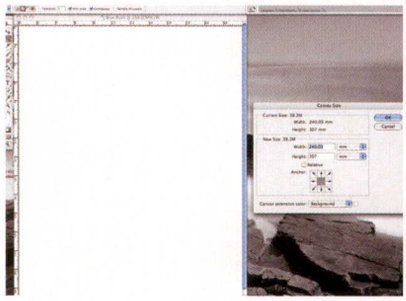
A second method used is selecting either Highlights, Midtones or Shadows in the Color Range selection menu. Choose the range closest to the cutout that you are trying to achieve, enter Quick Mask Mode and paint in/paint away the parts that you need/don't need with the Paintbrush tool set to black (to paint in) or white (to paint out). If you want a softer edge, go to Select>Feather and set to 1px.

If you have an image that is easily distinguishable from the background, it might be just as easy to select the background with the Magic Wand tool and use this to erase these areas to reveal a transparent background.

We have used all of these methods when cutting out stock for this tutorial and it is up to you to decide the best options when cutting out your stock. All methods are explained as you go through the tutorial steps.

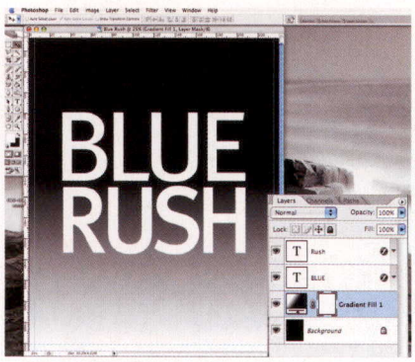
01 Document setup and background

Set up a new document ensuring that it is set to CMYK and 300dpi. The document size we have used here is 230 x 297mm with a 5mm bleed either side. The best place to start is on a separate layer, deciding what background you want (we've gone for a black-to-grey gradient). Type in your text on separate layers for each line of text.



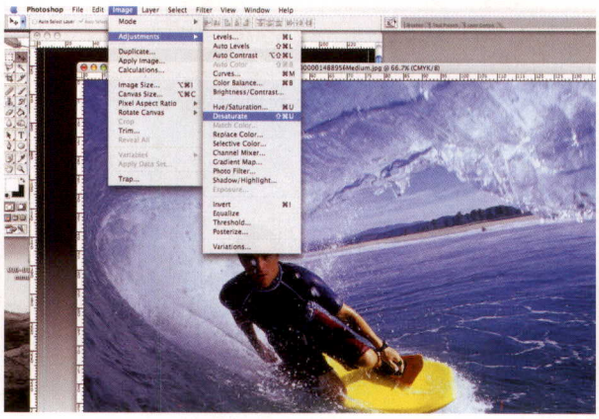
02 Decide type and arrangement

Now you need to decide on a typeface. We have used RetroDings; it's free and simple with a slight edge to it. It's better to choose a sans-serif font so as not to over-complicate the final artwork. Make sure the kerning of your type is even and neatly stacked with room to breathe.



03 Ready, set, go!

Now your base is ready, it's time to start adding stock. Open up your first image, checking that it is 300dpi and CMYK. We're starting with a surfer (iStockphoto.com, image number '1488956'). The easiest way to cut out this particular image is to use channels. Desaturate via Image>Adjustments. Go to the Channels palette and select the Cyan channel. Duplicate it and enable the newly created 'Cyan copy' channel.



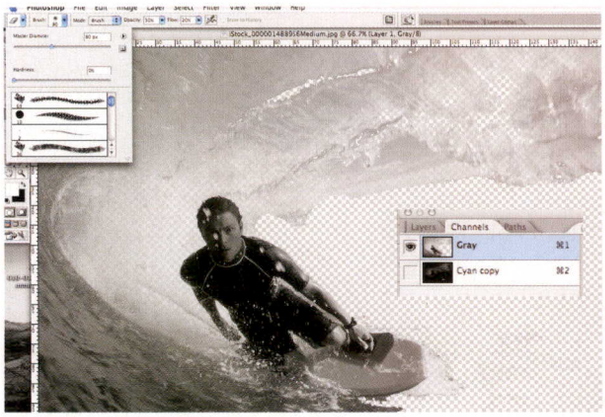
04 Cut out the surfer

Bring up the Levels palette and move the Midtones slider to 0.10. Make a selection from the channel by clicking on the round dotted circle at the bottom of the Channels palette. Inverse the selection by going to the Select menu. Click on the CMYK channel. Go back to your Layers palette and Copy>Paste the selection you've just made. This creates a new layer with the surfer and water cut out. Don't worry if it's not perfect, as it's now time to tidy it up.

BLUE
RUSH

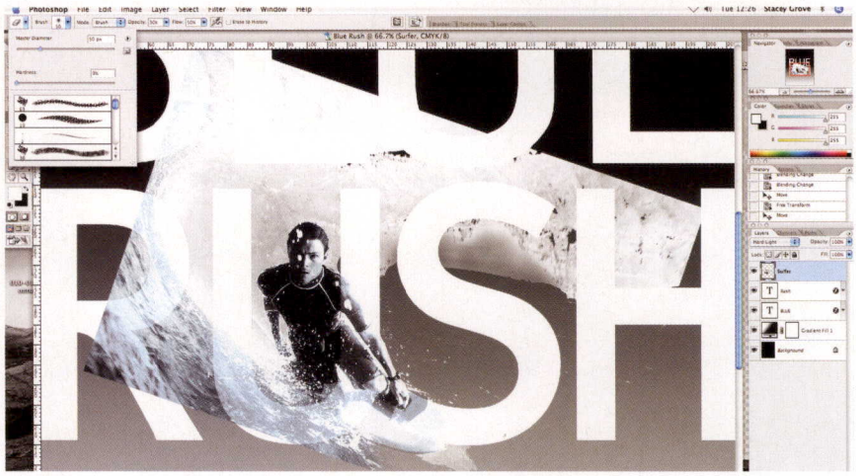
05 Tidy up the cutout

Convert the layer to Grayscale and tidy up the selection by erasing what you don't need. Don't worry about it being absolutely perfect, as we will polish the edges once we get it onto our main canvas. Use a soft brush, with a low Opacity of about 30% and Flow of about 20%, and gradually erase away so we have a softer-edged cutout.



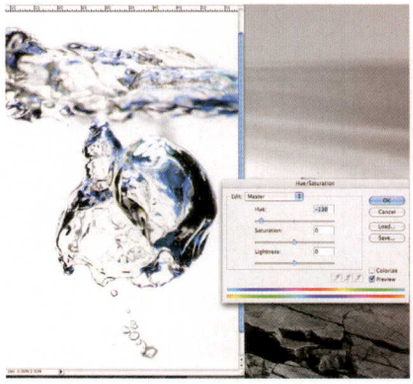
06 Drag to the main canvas and blend

Drag the cutout over to your main canvas and set the layer to a Hard Light blending mode. Edit>Transform until you are happy with the position of the surfer. When happy with the placement, rename the layer 'Surfer' and tidy up the edges with a soft brush, again set at a low Opacity and low Flow to blend in. When placing your elements, try to keep in mind the flow and work with the shape of the type. Click on the 'RUSH' text layer and rasterize the type so it is editable; this can be done by simply clicking on the type with the Eraser tool to bring up the dialog box, clicking to confirm. Again using a soft brush, erase parts of the letter behind the surfer to blend until you are happy with the balance.



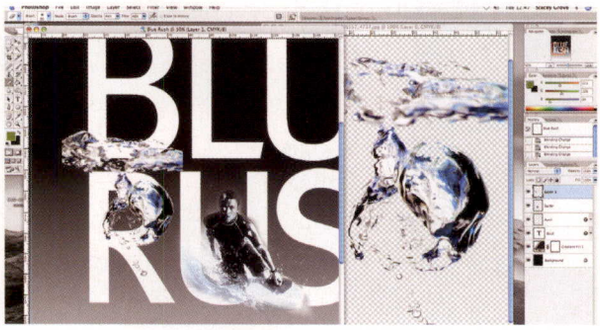
07 Decorate your type

We thought it would be nice to make it look as though areas of the type were melting. We selected an ice cube image (Stock.XCHNG, image number '396557') and changed the hue to our theme colour (blue) in the Hue/Saturation options. Using the Magic Wand tool, select the white background and erase the background to make it transparent.



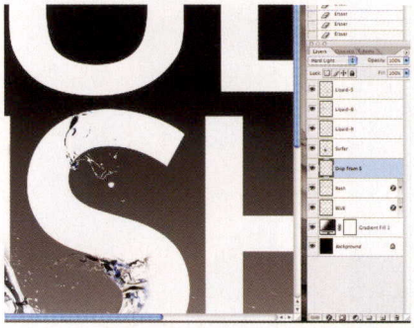
08 Liquid type

Drag the image onto your main canvas and Edit>Transform> Scale to resize and strategically place above the 'R' to make it look like it's melting. Using your soft brush set to a low Opacity and Flow, gradually erase away parts of the stock and the type on the text layer to blend in. Keep the blending mode on Normal to keep the detail in the image.



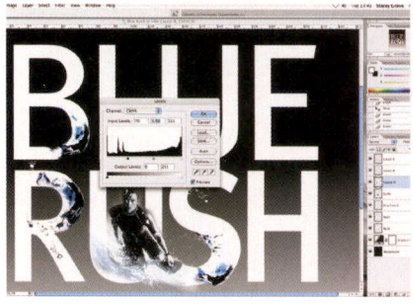
09 Repeat the technique

Do the same thing with other letters and name the layers 'Liquid-R', 'Liquid-B', etc, in the Layers palette. Don't worry if you erase too much of the lettering; you can always paint back in with a white paintbrush to get that blended balance.



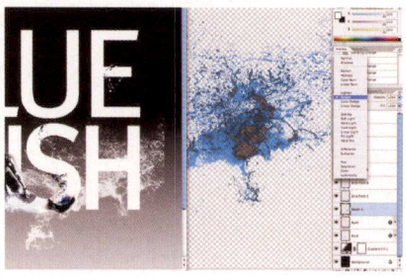
10 Experiment for effects

The main idea here is to experiment with various blending modes in the Layers palette to see what effects you can achieve, and also have a play with the Levels command in the Image> Adjustments menu to strengthen the contrast.



11 Cause a splash

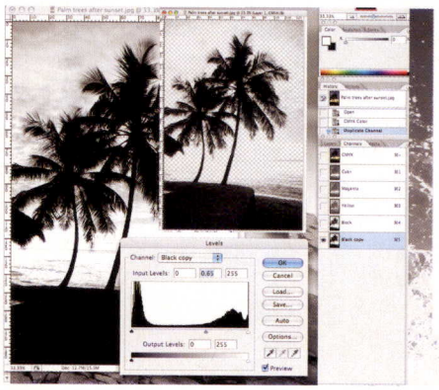
Open up a stock image of paint splatter (iStockphoto.com, image number '2949161') and adjust the hue to blue. Cut out using the Magic Wand tool and erase the background. Drag across to the main canvas and set to Screen to make the splash and place behind the 'H'. Resize if needed and name the layer 'Splash'.

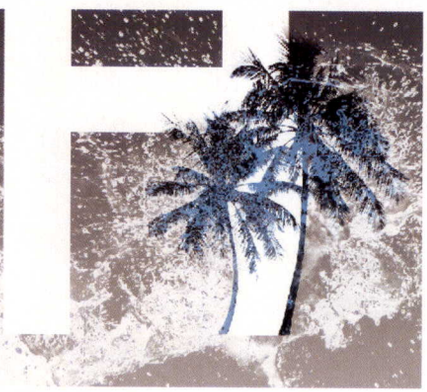


> The main idea here is to experiment with various blending modes in the Layers palette to see what effects you can achieve, and also have a play with the Levels command

12 Bring in a taste of the exotic

Open up the palm tree image supplied on our disc ('Imagine 15.jpg'). Using the Channels cutout method explained in Steps 3 and 4, cut out the palm trees by duplicating the Black channel and boosting the Midtones level to 0.65 with the Levels command to heighten the contrast. Create a new layer of the selection and, using a hard brush at 100% Opacity and Flow, erase any surrounding areas so we have a silhouette of the palm trees. Drag over to the main canvas. Set the blending mode to Hard Light and, using your soft brush again, on low Opacity and Flow, erase away the edges slightly to blend in.



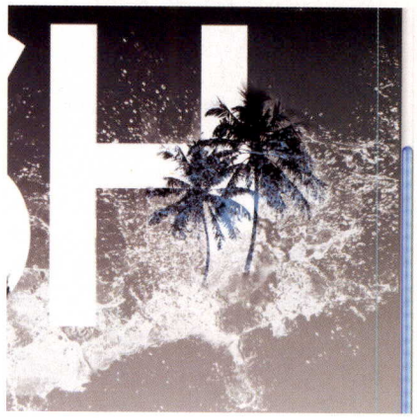


Quick tip

When opening your stock images, always check that they are converted to the same Color Space and dpi as your main canvas so that there are no issues when importing them into your work.

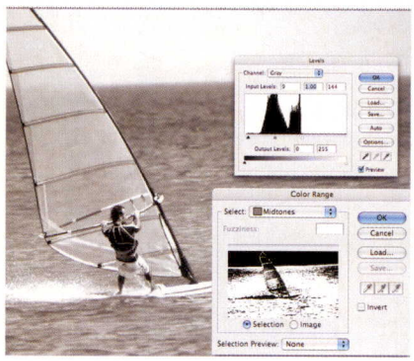
13 Wash away

Using your soft brush set to a low Opacity and Flow, erase the bottom of the right leg of the 'H' to make it appear as though it has been washed away. Shape the letter around the palm trees too to add to the effect.



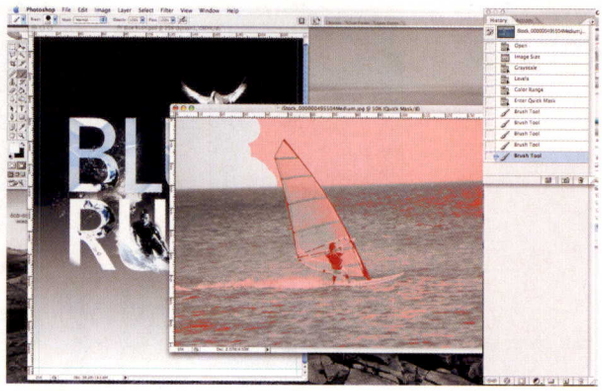
14 More stock

We're going to add a windsurfer image (iStockphoto.com, image number '495504') and convert it to Grayscale. Adjust the Levels to heighten the contrast. Go to the Select>Color Range option and select the Midtones to produce the closest selection for this particular image.



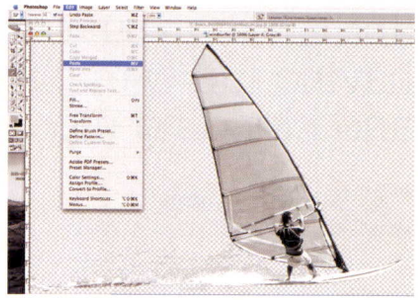
15 Windsurfer cutout

Enter Quick Mask Mode and, using the Paintbrush tool set to white, paint out anything that you don't need. Set the Paintbrush to black to paint in the windsurfer and the water trail. Exit Quick Mask Mode to view your selection. Don't worry if it's not a perfect selection, as we will blend and tidy when we take it across to the main canvas.



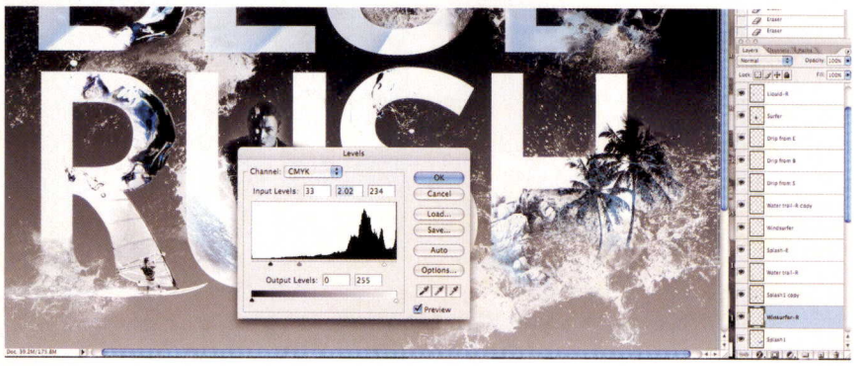
16 Paste it in

Copy>Paste the selection into a new document on a transparent background and save the cutout as 'Windsurfer' as you may need to import the cutout again at a later date.



17 Surfing the 'R'

Drag over the windsurfer cutout to the main canvas and position it over the right leg of the 'R'. We need to blend the image in to make it look like part of the letter. To do this, use the same method of erasing the letter and the edges of the stock image with our soft brush set to a low Opacity and Flow. Experiment with the Levels adjustment controls to blend more. Also, duplicate the Splash layer to cause more of a water trail and again make it appear as if the bottom of the letter is being washed away. Keep duplicating the Splash layer until you get the desired effect.



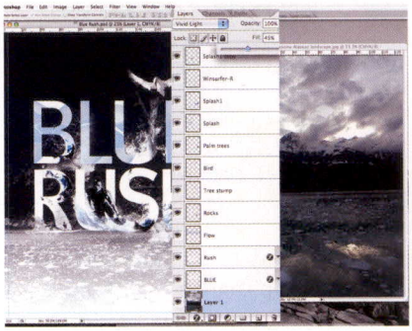
Add extra elements

The fun thing with this kind of artwork is that there are no limitations to what you can add to it. Just make sure that elements are carefully and strategically placed. Try to work with depth of field with smaller images placed to look like they are further away and larger images in the foreground. Erase away parts of the lettering depending on which direction objects are facing to show where it is heading. Blending images to be part of the lettering works nicely, as does making the lettering appear as if it's being affected by its surrounding environment. The splash in the 'B' looks like it has been caused by the shell dropping, for example.

Tutorial

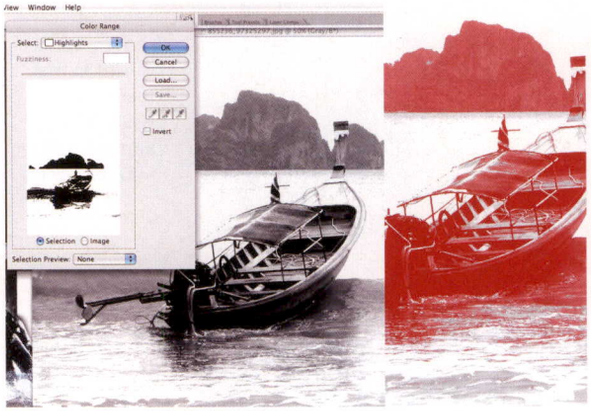
18 Background texture

The background is looking quite flat, so open up the icy landscape image supplied on the disc ('Imagine 2.jpg'). Convert it to Grayscale and drag over to the main canvas. Edit>Transform> Scale to fit it to the size of the canvas and place the layer below the type, but above the gradient. Set the blending mode to Vivid Light and the Fill to 45%. Position so the shoreline sits with the type.



19 Cut out boat

Open up a boat image (ours is Stock.XCHNG, image number '855236') and convert to Grayscale. Adjust the Levels and Curves to accentuate the contrast. From the Select>Color Range palette select the Highlights to get the most from the selection. Enter Quick Mask Mode and cut out as described in Step 15. Leave a bit of the water trail for extra effect.



20 'L, ahoy!

Copy>Paste the selection onto a new document and save the cutout. Drag the cutout over to the main canvas, then Edit> Transform>Scale to fit the space over the 'L'. It's time to make the boat appear to crash over the type.

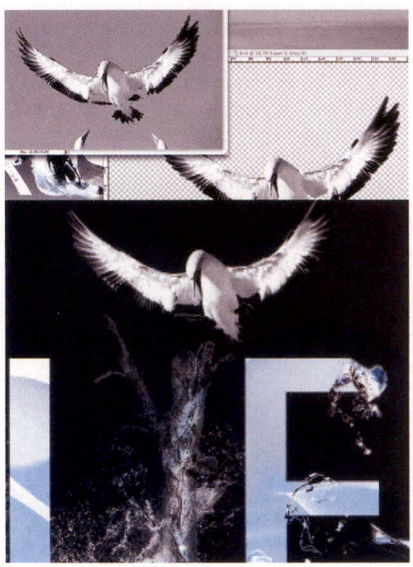
> There are so many more stock elements added into our final image. Get creative and add in your own stock, having fun with placements and blending modes

21 Wreck it right

Set the blending mode to Hard Light. Adjust the Levels to add more balance. Using a soft brush set to low Opacity and Flow, erase away the edges of the boat and letter to blend. Also, duplicate another Splash layer, Edit>Transform>Scale to resize and set the blending mode to Lighten. Duplicate the layer again, if you like, until you have the desired effect. Blend the tip of the boat into the darkness to add depth.

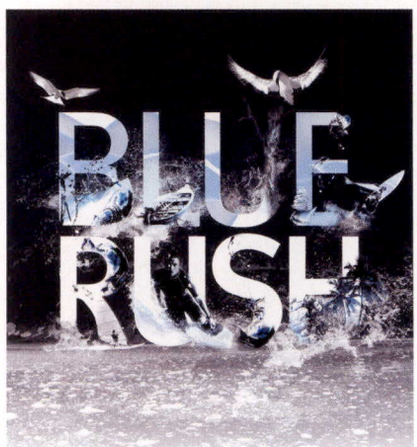
22 Add some birds

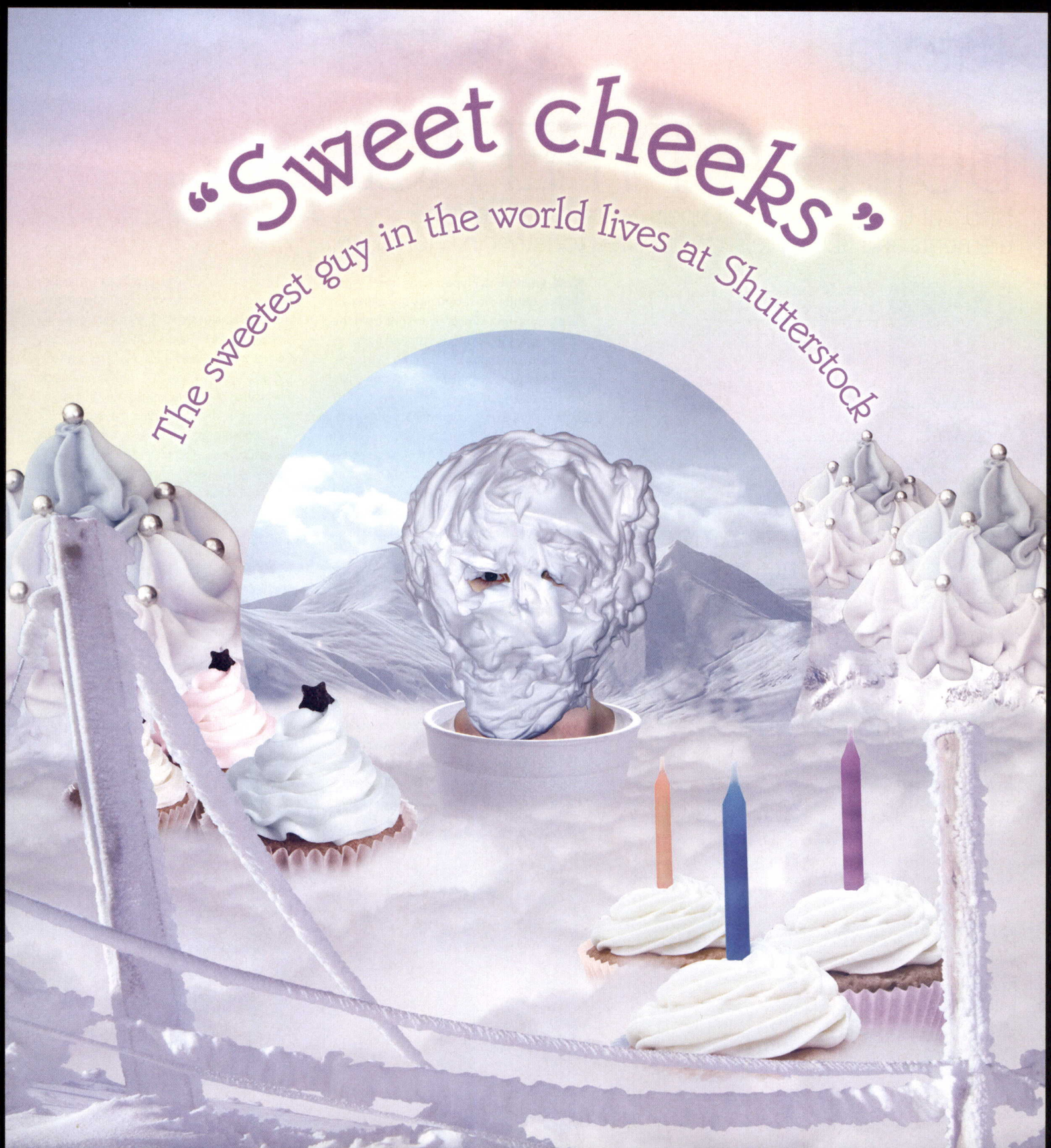
Using the Color Range selection method again (from Steps 14 and 15/19 and 20), cut out a bird image and drag onto your canvas. Blend the wings into the background slightly, so it doesn't appear stuck on, using the soft Eraser brush. We've done this a couple of times with different birds for some variety. Position them around your type as needed.



23 Final tidy

Throughout the tutorial, we have focused on a few stock elements and the various methods of cutting them out. However, there are so many more stock elements added into our final image, using the same methods. Get creative and add in your own stock, having fun with placements and blending modes until you are happy. Once you are happy with all of your positioning and elements, flatten your image (save a layered version first so you can make changes if you need to). Strengthen the overall black tone by using the Curves adjustment. Sharpen up the image a bit with Unsharp Mask from the Filters menu set to about 30% with the Radius set to 1.





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BUILD A TYPEFACE

Find out how to create an experimental typeface using vector elements and 3D renders, composited together in Photoshop

Our expert

Alex Varanese
www.alexvaranese.com

Despite winning numerous awards for his contributions to the field of animal husbandry, Alex freelances full-time as an illustrator and designer. Recent clients include Nike, Drambuie and Chevrolet.

Source files

Included on the CD are two files, 'amv_baroquen_objects.psd' and 'amv_baroquen_shapes.ai', which contain all bitmap and vector assets used in this tutorial.

Experimental typography has exploded in recent years, making a transition almost overnight from the dusty corners of boutique studios to the industry mainstream. Of particular relevance to us is the rough-edged look of mixed media, the spontaneity and creative freedom of which is a cornerstone of the movement. With that in mind, this tutorial will focus on the development of a highly graphical typeface that captures the haphazard expression of handcrafted found art.

The inspiration for the design came from the sound of baroque pop, an appropriately nebulous genre merging the traditional indie rock sound with an array of unconventional instruments. Our typeface, titled 'Baroquen', will explore these ideas in the form of a deliberately fractured and highly stylised alphabet.

Photoshop will make this process particularly intuitive as we build textured, lifelike letterforms from layers that realistically interact through clipping masks, while the strategic use of Smart Objects will help keep the alphabet organised and usable as it evolves. This tutorial will focus on the creation of the letter A, but note that all 26 characters were created using the same steps.

To achieve a sufficiently diverse look, we'll make heavy use of vector shapes and 3D renderings. All assets are provided, but be aware that the 3D imagery can be replaced easily with stock photography of your choosing if so desired.

If experimental typography can be distilled down to a single idea, it's that implying the familiar shape of a letter is often more interesting than representing it directly. Our goal is to keep that in mind at every step of the process.

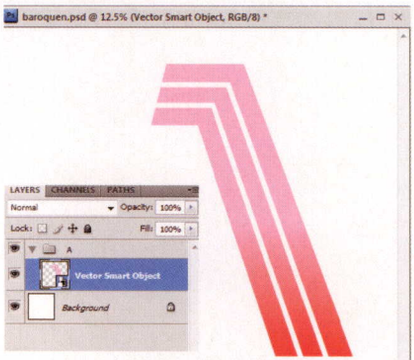
> "Of particular relevance to us is the rough-edged look of mixed media, the spontaneity and creative freedom of which is a cornerstone of the movement"

01 Setting up

Create a new document of 6 x 6" at 600dpi, or 3,600 x 3,600 pixels. Each letter will be created within this space, making them usable in print work. Create a new layer group and title it 'A'. Alphabets get complex quickly, so let's get in the habit of organising and naming our layers. The creation of each letter will follow this pattern.

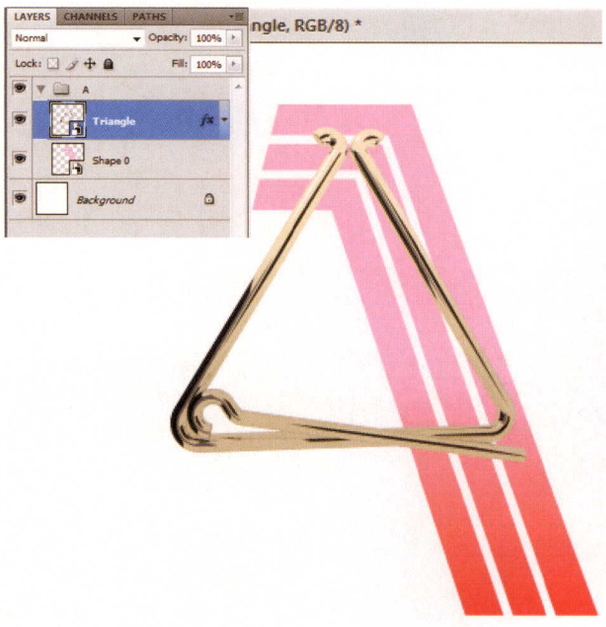
02 An abstract foundation

Import or Paste Shape 0 from 'amv_baroquen_shapes.ai' as a vector Smart Object. Resize it until it comfortably fits the available space. Each letter will begin with one or two vector shapes that loosely define the letter's form and provide an abstract contrast to the more photographic elements to come.



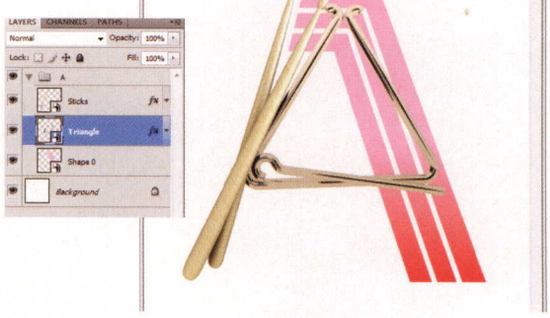
03 The triangle

Open 'amv_baroquen_objects.psd' and drag the Triangle layer into the document. Be careful – this is the world's most complex musical instrument. Convert it to a Smart Object immediately so we can safely modify it as necessary without compromising the image. Resize and position the layer until it roughly lines up with the vector shape and forms the crossbar of the A.



04 The percussion section

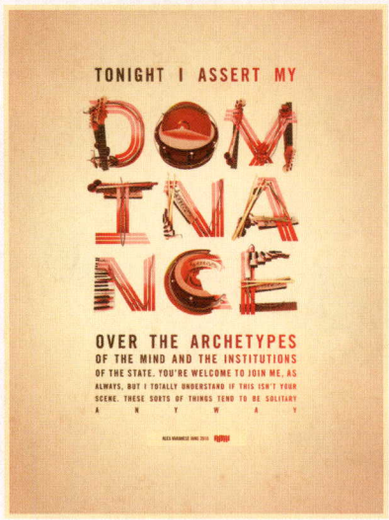
Let's lay down a beat by dragging the Sticks layer in next. Again, convert it to a Smart Object first. Resize and rotate it until it forms the other side of the A. Not bad, we think you'll agree. We've got a pretty convincing letterform already. Now let's see how far we can push it.



A B C D E
F G H I J K
L M N O P
Q R S T U
V W X Y
Z

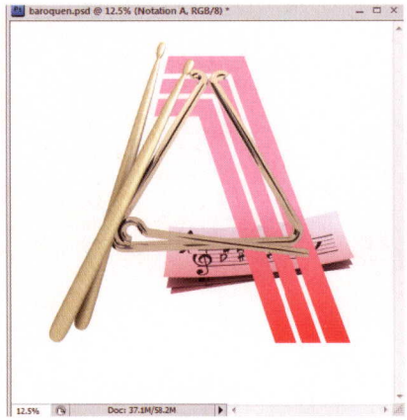
Baroquen in action

Technically, what we're creating isn't a typeface, but rather what's known as a handset: a collection of characters provided in the form of high-res bitmaps that are laid out one by one. Handsets are highly expressive and fun to work with, but are usually reserved for highly stylised display type such as titles and short phrases due to the labour involved and their general lack of precision. Furthermore, since each letter is given so much attention, it's imperative that at least one alternate design is created for each letter; repeats will look redundant and unnatural otherwise.



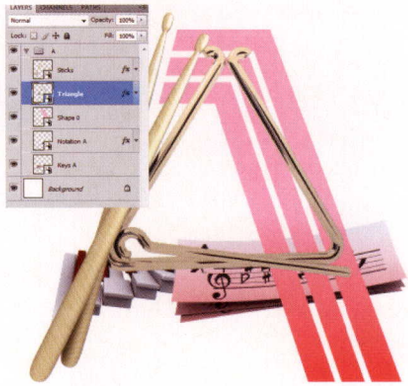
05 A bulkier crossbar

Drag in the Notation A layer and, as always, convert it to a Smart Object. Position it so that it creates a bulkier crossbar that extends beyond the side of the A. Our goal is not only to strengthen the shape, but to break a few rules and make it more chaotic.



06 A little balance

Drag in the Keys A layer. Convert it to a Smart Object and position it so that it flows across the intersection of the A's left side and the crossbar. This balances the letter and helps define it more clearly. By placing the layer in the back, we get a subtle addition to the overall composition without demanding too much attention.

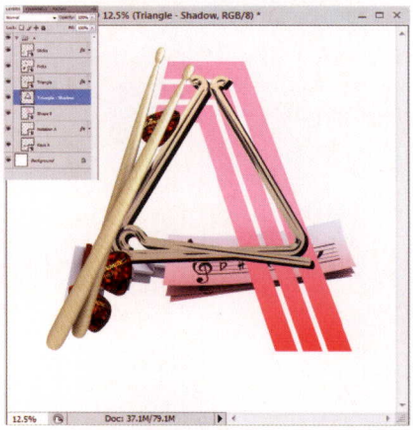


07 One more thing

The letter looks good, but it's just a bit too clean. Let's mix things up by sprinkling in some smaller elements to disrupt the flow a little. Drag in Pick A, Pick B and Pick C. Arrange them just behind the sticks, then group them into a larger Smart Object called 'Picks'. The basic A shape is now complete.

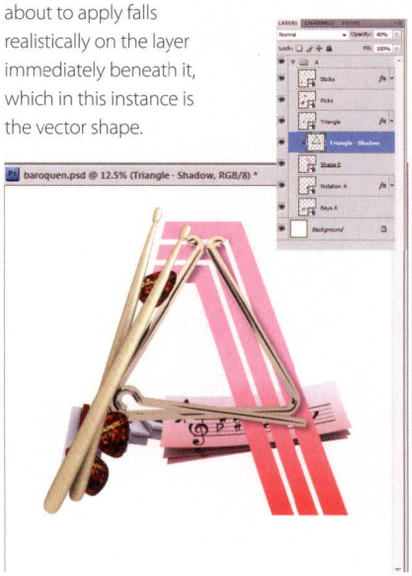
08 Shadow shapes

Next, let's inject some realism by throwing some shadows down. Cmd/Ctrl-click the Triangle layer to get its selection, then create a new layer called 'Triangle – Shadow' beneath it. Use Shift and the arrow keys to offset the shadow diagonally, then fill it with black. This creates the darkest core of the shadow, known as the umbra.



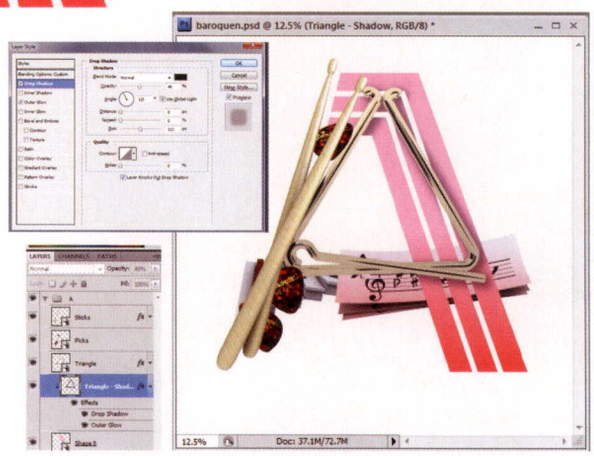
09 Adding in the shadow details

Apply a 24-pixel Gaussian Blur and set the layer's Transparency to approximately 40% to soften the shadow. Right-click the layer's thumbnail in the Layers palette and then select Create Clipping Mask. This will ensure that the shadow you're about to apply falls realistically on the layer immediately beneath it, which in this instance is the vector shape.



10 More shadow details

Now add a Drop Shadow blending effect. Set the blending mode to Normal, colour to black, Opacity to 46%, Distance to 0px and Size to 111px. Add an Outer Glow next. Set the blending mode to Normal, the colour to black, Opacity to 52% and Size to 84%. This gives the shadow its softer outer edge, known as the penumbra.

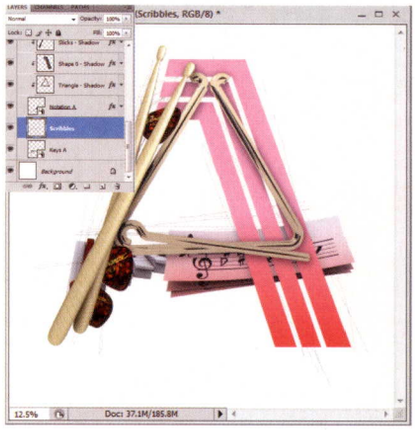


11 Finishing the shadows

Repeat Steps 8-10 for each object in the composition. Don't forget to clip every shadow to the layer onto which it's meant to fall. As a final thought, remember that no shadow layers should be visible over the background.

12 A little more chaos

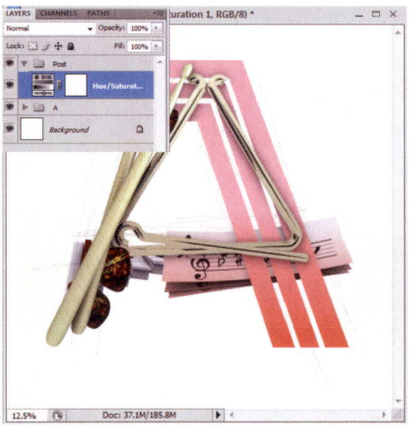
The letter is done, but let's take one last opportunity to leave our mark. Create a new layer called 'Scribbles' near the bottom of the composition. Pick any rough-edged brush and set its radius to 3px and Opacity to 100%. Set the foreground colour to black. Using the Paintbrush, scribble erratically around the letter's shape.



> It's imperative that at least one alternate design is created for each letter; repeats will look redundant and unnatural otherwise

13 Postprocessing

The A looks great, but these colours are dull. Collapse the A layer folder and create a new one called 'Post'. These layers will sit on top of the entire alphabet and apply uniform colour enhancement. Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer with a Hue of 12 and a Saturation of -17.

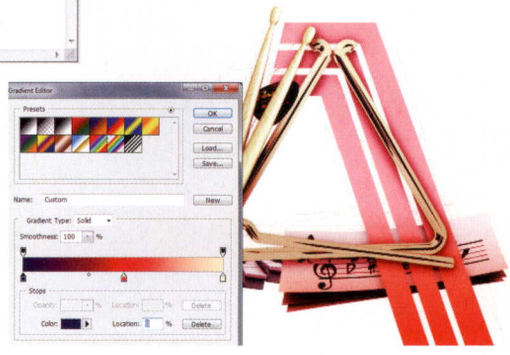


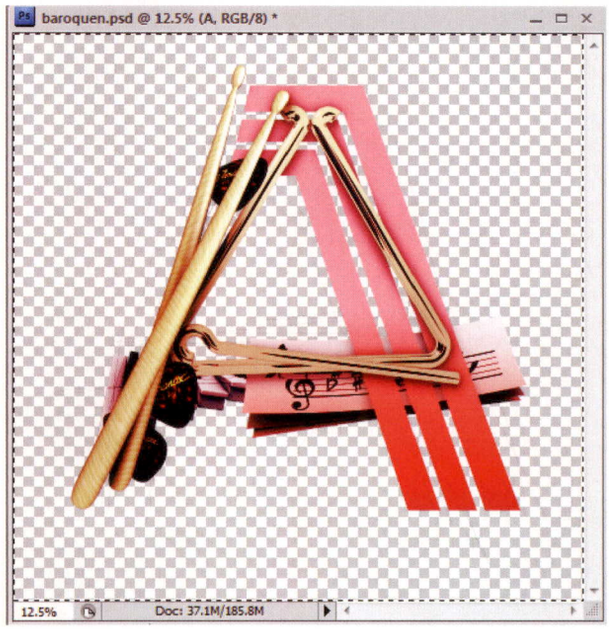
14 Kick up the levels

By lowering the saturation, we now have more room to play with levels without blowing out the colour, and the yellow tint will yield a vintage feel that will become more apparent. Add a Levels adjustment layer with the black point at 88 and the gamma at 1.52.

15 Stylised colour

Finally, add a Gradient Map to stylise the colour spectrum. Create a three-point gradient with '#270042' at 0%, '#FF001E' at 50% and '#FFF0BE' at 100%. This boosts the overall red tint but cools off darker tones, enhancing the retro feel. Notice the shadows have become more dramatic.





16 Usage and next steps

That's it! We've completed the A and established a process for making an entire alphabet. It's just a matter of creativity from here on out. Also, note that you can copy each letter by hiding the background layer and using Copy Merged to grab the entire composition (including the Post folder adjustment layers).

PHB2 COVER: Dan Scott produced this artwork for the *Dungeons & Dragons* collectable card game. When working on an image he generally works on it in these steps: sketch, values, colours and rendering © *Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All rights reserved*

MASTER GAME ART

With production values and overall popularity of games now rivalling films, what does it take to produce artwork worthy of entertaining millions? We spoke with six artists in the industry to find out how they work, what they've worked on – and their top tips for fellow artists aspiring to move into this sector

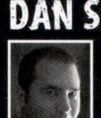
Games are big business. According to GfK Chart-Track, last year saw videogames software sales totalling £1.6 billion in the UK alone. Besides the shift in graphical capabilities and processing power of PCs and next-generation consoles, the internet has played a large part in evolving the games industry. Ubisoft's lead character artist, Dorothy Ballarini, agrees: "The ease of access to information and technology has facilitated the training of professionals. Anyone can easily get access to any kind of information, so if you are really willing to learn then all you need to become a professional is passion, talent and an internet connection!"

"There has also been a marked shift in how game art is perceived," adds Rob Alexander. "When I first got started in this industry, game art was 'ghetto art'. It was low budget, often the starting ground for new artists, and was looked down upon by artists in other genres." What's interesting to note is that this has now changed, says Alexander: "Videogames have proven that they can generate as much revenue as, sometimes even exceeding, that of movies. Meanwhile, trading card games make more money over the long term with a loyal following. An increasing number of artists are turning to games not as a training ground but as a destination of choice. And as a result, the calibre of art in the game genre has improved tremendously."

ANOWON: Dan Scott's art features on the Anowon, The Ruin Sage card, part of the *Magic: The Gathering* collectable trading card game © *Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All rights reserved*

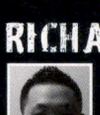
FEATURED ARTISTS

DAN SCOTT



Dan is a freelance illustrator who's been in the games industry for 14 years. He's worked on *Magic: The Gathering, World Of Warcraft, Warhammer 40K* and *Dungeons and Dragons*.
www.danscottart.com

RICHARD LEE



Richard is a concept artist and matte painter. During his four years in this industry he has worked on *Stranglehold, Duke Nukem Forever, Blitz The League II* and *Rage*, plus more.
www.paintrichardpaint.com

DOROTHY BALLARINI

Dorothy is a lead character artist at Ubisoft's Porto Alegre studio. She's worked on *Imagine Party Planner* and *Wedding Designer* for Nintendo DS, as well as PC, Xbox and PlayStation 2 titles.
www.dorothyballarini.com

ERIC RYAN

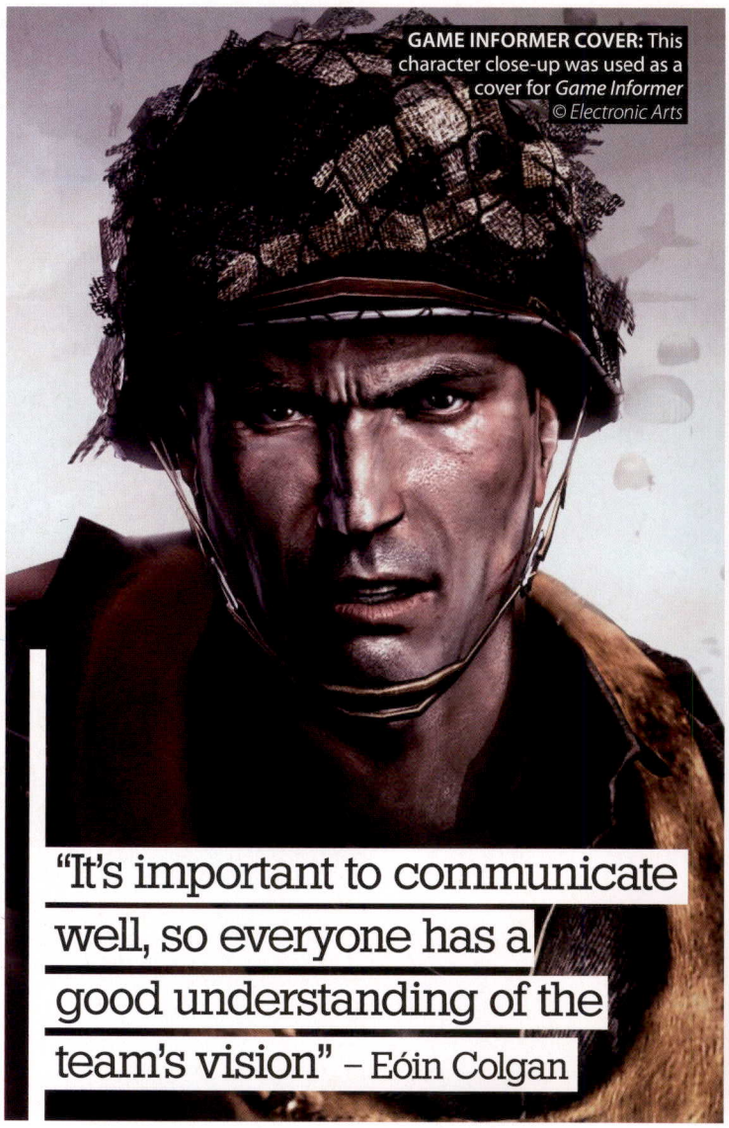
Meet Liquid Entertainment's assistant art director Eric Ryan. He's worked in the industry for seven years on such games as *Rise Of The Argonauts* and *Dungeons and Dragons: Dragonshard*.
www.mellowsmoothe.com

EÓIN COLGAN

Eóin is a senior character artist for Electronic Arts. Games he's worked on include *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Medal Of Honor Airborne*. He's currently working on an unannounced project for EA.
www.eoinart.com

ROB ALEXANDER

Rob has worked in the industry for 19 years. *Magic: The Gathering* he was on since inception, plus many other trading card games. He's also produced concept art for shooter *The Agency, Mythica* and more.
www.robalexander.com



GAME INFORMER COVER: This character close-up was used as a cover for *Game Informer* © *Electronic Arts*

"It's important to communicate well, so everyone has a good understanding of the team's vision" – Eóin Colgan

AIRBORNE: Eóin Colgan created marketing, posters, covers and pullouts for *Medal Of Honor Airborne* © *Electronic Arts*

So how does game art go from concept to completion? Well, as you'd expect, the start of a new project involves lots of meetings, brainstorming, research and visual development. For EA's senior character artist Eóin Colgan, the start of the project is when the core art values are decided upon with the art director. This is in order to build the benchmark art assets that will define the look of the project. "It's important to communicate this well, so everyone has a good understanding of the team's vision," Colgan comments.

For a freelance matte painter the challenge really lies with research and thumbnails. "Without the right research and references, there can be mistakes made later down the road that won't make sense. This key beginning step saves me doing any work over again," explains concept artist Richard Lee. Once Lee's sketches with revisions are approved, he can get on with painting.

As for a project that is solely produced within the studio, the first step after establishing the theme and some of the game mechanics is the study of visual cues that the game should follow in order to help the artists. "Next up," says Ubisoft's lead character designer Dorothy Ballarini, "we prepare mood boards with several images from different sources that might translate into the concepts and meanings we want the player to capture."

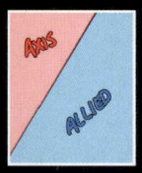
QUICK SKETCH WARRIOR (RIGHT): This is the initial draft for a prototype character, by Dorothy Ballarini, that's currently in design at Ubisoft Porto Alegre, Brazil © *Property of Ubisoft*

THERE'S NO I IN TEAM

Throughout the production process, teamwork is key to ensuring things run smoothly. "I work with every department in the company," says Eric Ryan, assistant art director at Liquid: "Lots of people have ideas, so the more you can appeal to people or keep them in the loop, the smoother things run." However, this isn't without its difficulties, as Ryan explains: "The trick is to keep the design from being compromised in the process, so it's really a balancing act every time." As for concept artist and matte painter Richard Lee, he works with the art director and environment lead on a regular basis. Meanwhile, Ubisoft lead character

IN PIECES

Eóin Colgan tells us how he created a piece of Medal Of Honor Airborne artwork for a cover



STAGE 1 Concept

"The concept for this *Medal Of Honor Airborne* shot was to have the action split diagonally, showing a tension between the axis and the allied soldiers. Colour will be used later to help this divide."

STAGE 2 Tension

"To build tension I wanted to create a moment of silence before the action takes place. The broken wall divide will be used to split the scene, directing the viewers' eyes towards the allied soldier in the foreground, to outside where the enemy patrols."

STAGE 3 Text

"When working on a magazine cover it is important to take into consideration where the text will be laid out. This will define how to frame your shot and what elements are most important and visible."

STAGE 4 Giving it character

"Here I am working on the main character, making sure his weight and posture look right for the pose. He is seconds away from firing on that tank outside, so he stands tight to the wall waiting for a signal from the kneeling squad member."

STAGE 5 Poses

"Small adjustment to arm position – both these work for me, but I'll stick to a more 'ready to fire' posture."

STAGE 6 Tweaks

"All the assets are placed in the scene and a first pass is done. There will be quite a bit of tweaking done from here to help make some important elements stand out and others recede."

STAGE 7 Comes to life

"All the colour, shadows, contrast and background elements are done in Photoshop for speed and easy adjustment. This is when the shot comes to life. The outside axis area has a warmer tone to it, drawing attention to the danger, while the allied soldier hides in shades of blue. He is now framed with colour and shadow, helping him pop out from his surroundings."

© Electronic Arts

ODYSSEUS FINAL: This character was going to be one of the Argonauts, but the dev team chose Pan instead. Eric Ryan says that he's still his favourite both in look and game design, though

© Liquid Entertainment/Codemasters

ODYSSEUS ROUGH/STUDIES: "This character was complicated because his armour and weaponry needed to feel ornate and kingly, as well as serving multiple attack functions," says Eric Ryan

© Liquid Entertainment/Codemasters

HARPY FINAL: "This was one of the monsters that never made it into the final game, but it was great fun to create," says Eric Ryan
© Liquid Entertainment/Codemasters

WARRIOR 2 (WORK IN PROGRESS): This 3D model from Dorothy Ballarini, is a prototype character for a game that's currently not in production yet
© Property of Ubisoft

FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION

We look at how Rob Alexander created this artwork for trading card game Magic: The Gathering in Photoshop

STAGE 1

The art assignment called for a very organic, strange looking cross between an alien laboratory and a flooded ruin. Alexander began sketching the large, amorphous shapes in the foreground and allowed the image to evolve on its own. Once completed, the pencil drawing was scanned into Photoshop and colourised using the Hue/Saturation option.

STAGE 2

On a new layer, the background was painted a basic blue with varying shades. Drawing properties were set to Multiply and placed on the background colour. On another layer the foreground darks were strengthened and filled in, making them look more solid.

STAGE 3

Details were added to the water – ripples, suggestions of vegetation and so on. These were painted primarily with the basic Chalk brush and Airbrush, setting the Opacity Control to Pen Pressure.

STAGE 4

The image is printed out and mounted onto Masonite, sealed with clear acrylic paint and worked over considerably with traditional oil paints.

© Hasbro/Wizards of the Coast

SNOWFLAKE: Richard Lee produced this concept painting for a town square with the intention of showing a change in weather conditions
© Midway Games

MANSION EXTERIOR: Here's one of Richard Lee's concept paintings for a mansion in the game *Criminal*
© Midway Games

> "Photoshop enables me to be quick and experimental in a very forgiving way. The ability to down shapes and colours quickly can bring about various usable designs" – Eric Ryan

artist Dorothy Ballarini finds that she must work with programmers in addition to the art director and art team: "I need to check with the programming team to see if things we would like to implement in the game are possible."

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

Whatever your role in a game art project, there are always tweaks to be made, as Dorothy Ballarini explains: "The gaming industry operates in a highly competitive market, and the public is becoming more demanding. We have to adapt quickly if we want to produce top quality games. It is virtually impossible to predict the changes that may occur during the production process, but it always happens and we must be ready for that."

In addition to tweaks, there are also many challenges facing artists. For Eric Ryan the most common difficulty is finding an original and provocative design. "The best way to overcome this is to experiment. Photoshop enables me to be quick and experimental in a very forgiving way. The ability to down shapes and colours can quickly bring about various usable designs."

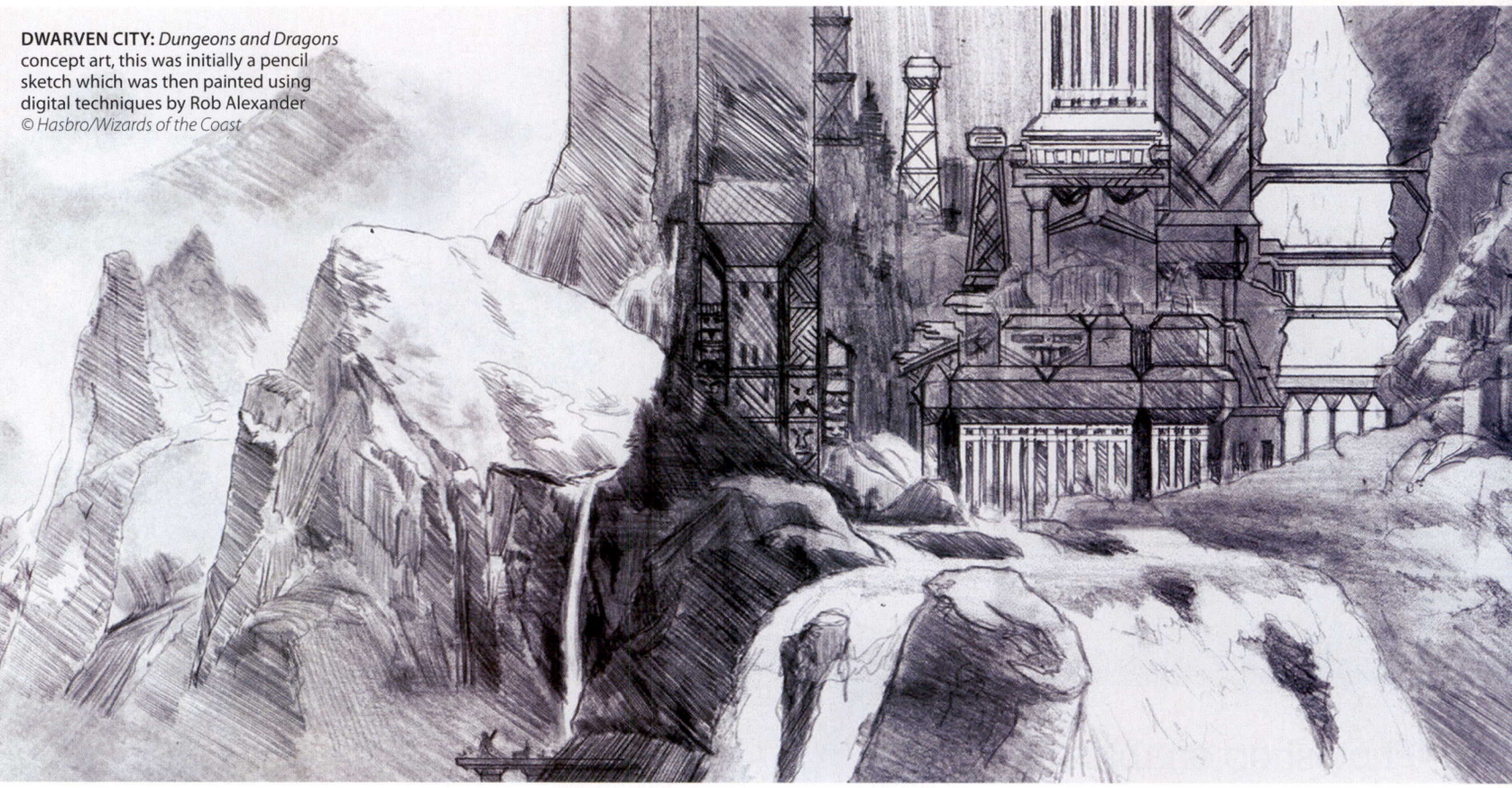
Rob Alexander agrees. For him a common problem is making sure he doesn't repeat himself. "Whether it's ideas running in small circles or cropping up from one job to the next, there is a danger of repeating myself, which means creative stagnation. This can be particularly tough to overcome when I am doing cards for *Magic: The Gathering*, because I will often get 'basic land' cards, which have rigid colour and design restrictions."

However, he says that Photoshop is particularly helpful in this situation: "I will often take a sketch that I like, scan it, extend the canvas and continue working on it or place it next to another sketch, creating a third image from the first two – anything that trips the brain and gets it thinking around those corners. With Photoshop, I can take all or part of a sketch that I like, combine it with other sketches, move elements about and/or resize them, all in a very organic process that allows the computer to become an invisible tool, which is wonderful for me."

In Eóin Colgan's opinion, the top tools in Photoshop that are great for good workflow are groups and layer masks within the layers. "With complex files they really help streamline the creative process," says Colgan. To save even more time while you work, both he and illustrator Dan Scott recommend the use of 'hot keys'. "Anything you use more than once an hour that's hidden in a menu should be made into a hot key," explains Colgan.

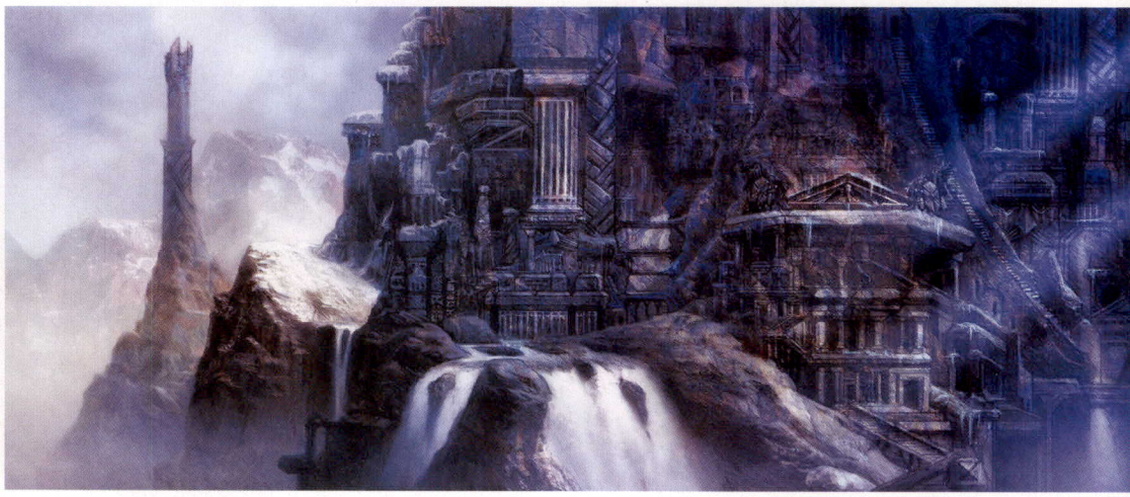
Blending modes and adjustment layers are Eric Ryan's weapons of choice in Photoshop. "They help to fine-tune my image's colours and values so things feel like they sit in the same space. For example, if I create a creature and I want to overlay a photo-texture of a frog's skin for more realism, these layering features help to bring the two media together seamlessly."

For Dan Scott, the brushes are used most frequently in his work: "I'll occasionally use the Blur, Dodge and Burn tools, but I always use them with a rough brush to avoid my images looking too airbrushed and digital."



DWARVEN CITY: *Dungeons and Dragons* concept art, this was initially a pencil sketch which was then painted using digital techniques by Rob Alexander
© Hasbro/Wizards of the Coast

OUT OF THE MIST: This artwork for *Magic: The Gathering* began with an initial sketch with marker and white chalk on tinted paper, created by Rob Alexander
© Hasbro/Wizards of the Coast



SOFTWARE SKILLS

Photoshop is an important resource and part of the daily workflow for many individuals creating art for games, as concept artist and matte painter Richard Lee confirms: "I use Photoshop every day to paint. It's the only painting program that I use."

Illustrator Dan Scott agrees. He uses it for everything from the initial rough thumbnails all the way to the final rendering and colour tweaks. He, like many artists, also uses it alongside programs such as Corel Painter. However, an increasing number of artists are using 3D software such as 3ds Max, Maya, ZBrush, XSI and Mudbox.

Eric Ryan, assistant art director for Liquid Entertainment, is currently teaching himself how to use ZBrush: "I've noticed that some of the top film talent are using both 2D and 3D together to help create a final concept that is even more believable." And Ryan told us that this approach has added bonuses when working in games, because fewer elements get lost in translation when you pass your work on to the 3D artist.

As for anyone considering moving into the game art industry, the main advice from these artists is that you have to know the basics. "Draw and paint regularly, and from life as often as you can. You need a foundation of traditional art skills to succeed in this industry," says Rob Alexander.

Originality is vital too, says Eóin Colgan: "Don't be too heavily influenced by the art you see on the forums – what do *you* bring to the table that's unique to your art sensibilities? Stand out from the crowd." Eric Ryan is of the same opinion: "Always look ahead. If you have a great classmate or co-worker you aspire to be as good as, then look at the master artist they are looking at. Focus on the best and pull their work apart until you understand how they work."

Nevertheless, a career in game art isn't for the faintheartedness. "You should be extremely passionate about this. It requires a lot of commitment and determination," says Dorothy Ballarini. Dan Scott concurs: "Only pursue it if you love art, love games and are willing to put in a lot of hard work. You can get a lot richer in other jobs, but you won't have nearly as much fun."

"Draw and paint regularly, and from life as often as you can. You need a foundation of traditional art skills to succeed in this industry" – Rob Alexander

ASTRAL RIFT: This piece of concept art for *Dungeons and Dragons* was created using a combination of watercolour and digital techniques by Rob Alexander
© *Hasbro/Wizards of the Coast*

RESOURCES

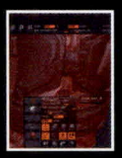
Want to learn more about game art?

RESOURCE 1
Essential read

The Art Of The Video Game

Publisher: Quirk Books
Web: http://irreference.com
Price: £25.00/$40.00

This book features inspirational art from top titles, including *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*, *Half-Life 2* and *Killzone 2*. It also includes a brief history of videogame art, so it's a great guide if you're getting started.



RESOURCE 2
DVD training

Character Design and Modelling For Next-Gen Games

Publisher: The Gnomon Workshop
Web: www.thegnomonworkshop.com
Price: £42.35/$69.00

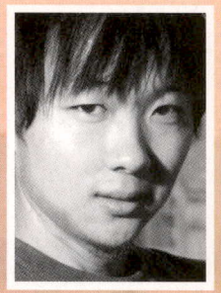
Blizzard Entertainment's cinematic artist Vitaly Bulgarov guides you through character design and modelling using Photoshop, ZBrush and XSI. The DVD covers topics such as designing mechanical details, sculpting brushes and organic details, broken down into easy-to follow chapters.

RESOURCE 3
Web inspiration

deviantArt

Web: www.deviantart.com

deviantArt is a source of inspiration and presentations for and from amateur and pro artists. Search by category to find fan art, portfolios and more, or upload some of your own 'deviations' – the choice is yours.



FENG ZHU DESIGN

We interview Asian teacher, designer and visionary behind the FZD School of Design, Feng Zhu

Feng Zhu started out as an architect. Well, studying architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. His learning curve was sharpened when he transferred from this course, after a single year, to enrol at the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena. Majoring in Product and Industrial Design, his first job owed a lot to his plethora of concept skills, gained through his rich educational background. Now Zhu is giving something back.

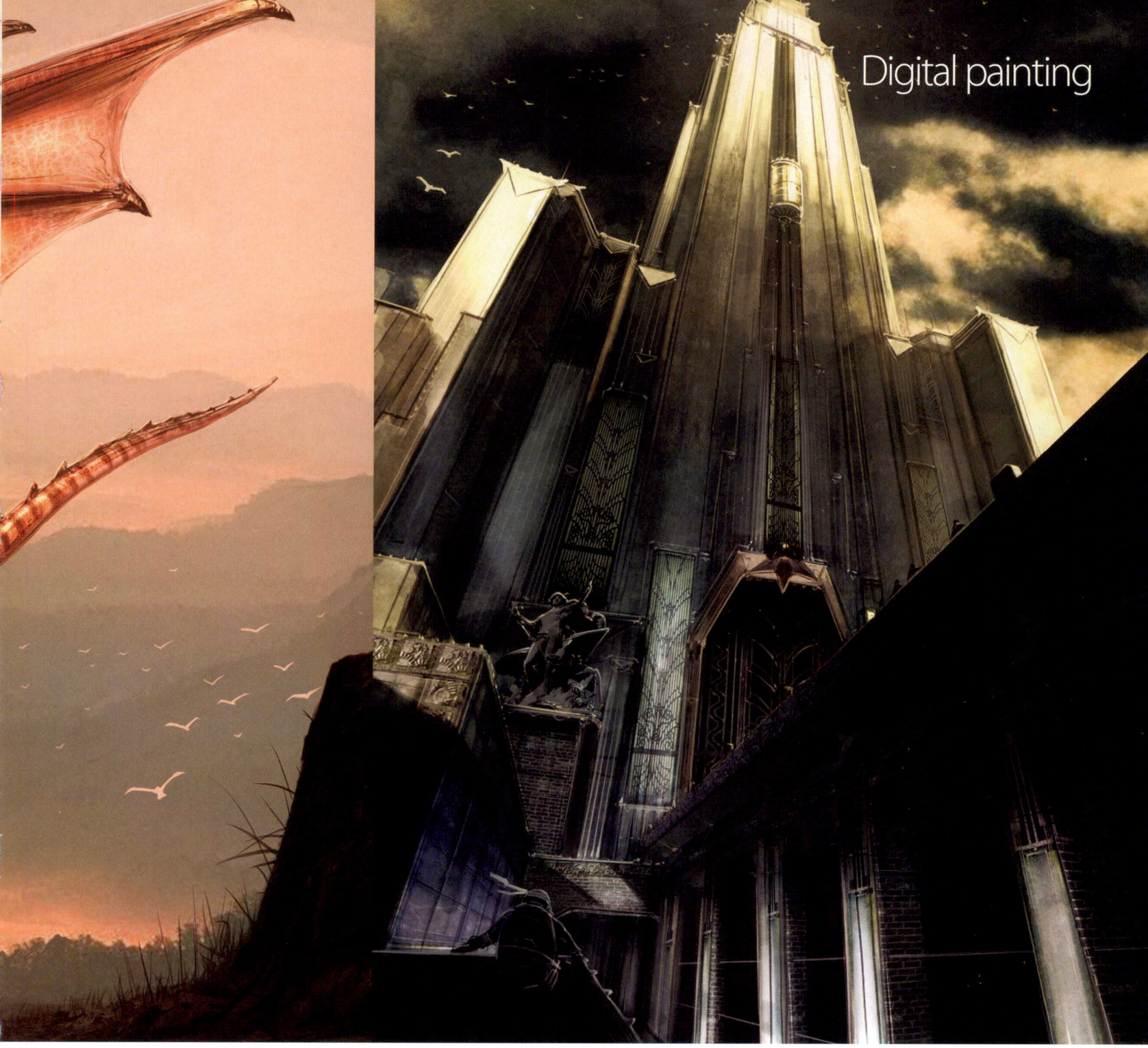
Offered his first concept job at Origin Systems, Austin, Texas – working on the *Wing Commander* franchise, he reflects: "This was a dream come true for a young designer – I was only 18 at the time. The experience I gained at Origin allowed me to move up the 'food chain' in design, jumping from one studio to another. Finally, in 2003, I started my own design studio called Feng Zhu Design (FZD) based in Los Angeles. In 2006, I co-founded a game development studio in Beijing, China." Most recently, in 2009, he founded the FZD School of Design in Singapore: "I consider all the choices I've made in life to be defining moments. Every action has a reaction and that's the way I like to live."

So what reaction has the FZD School of Design had to date? An extremely positive one by all accounts. FZD has established itself as an industry frontrunner, and Zhu has worked closely with many international directors – including James Cameron and Michael Bay, on blockbuster films such as *Transformers* and *Star Wars: Episode III*. Clients such as Warner Brothers, Epic Games and Electronic Arts add further gloss to an already polished portfolio. However, Zhu is not getting ahead of himself – indeed his thoughtful and diplomatic riposte to the question, 'How cool is it to work with such giant international clients?' is: "I received very good training in school to treat every project with professional respect. Working with a high-profile director or a small studio art director is exactly the same to me. As a team, we work as one to create a product. Our personal backgrounds or 'fame' rarely come into play. The difficulty of the project lies not within the individuals, but within the project's scope."

LORD OF THE RINGS, DRAGON DESIGN: *"This painting actually came from a very quick side-view sketch of a dragon design. Once I finished the sketch, I decided to add some quick values. One thing led to another and I ended up painting it"*
© Electronic Arts

TRANSLATION

Zhu can think of a few times where the studio has been up against it, underlining that reputation means nothing – while diligence and productivity,



with a pinch of imagination, are everything. He explains: "One particular difficulty arose on the *Transformers* movie. Michael Bay definitely didn't want the robots to look like the original toys and neither did the design team. The toy designs simply would not hold up on the big screen. But this created a catch-22. The *Transformers* franchise was born out of toys, yet we couldn't design the robots to look like them. The goal was to design robots and update them for the new millennium. Thus we went through several phases of design, trying all different directions.

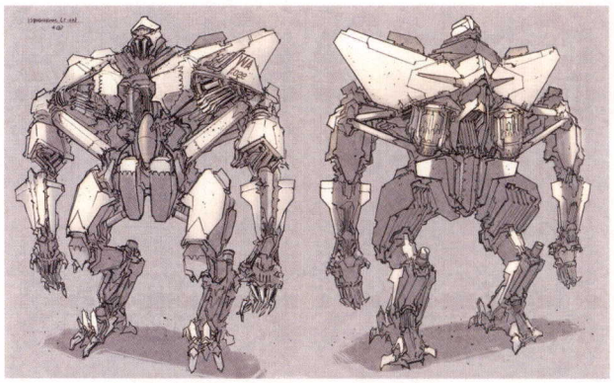
"We started by focusing on the robots' alien forms. By understanding their history and home planet, we could carry that design language into their Earth forms. I was personally worried that the fans would hate the new designs because they deviated from the originals, but in the end, the project looked awesome and the rest is history. Though I think Megan Fox helped a lot!"

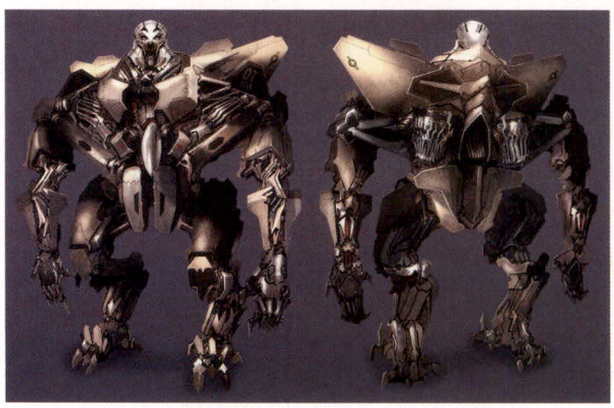
Translating fiction into fact is a core skill as a concept artist. Zhu's architectural and industrial design history serves him well when trying to authentically amalgamate reality with fantasy, that's also quickly transferable to the big screen.

"Our job requires a strong understanding of the fundamentals: perspective, lighting, composition, values, etc," he says. "Without this information, one can't create something from scratch. In addition, we must have a very imaginative mind and the ability to construct new and believable worlds. If you can combine the above two points with strong drawing abilities, then you have the makings of a professional designer."

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES THE MOVIE, MAIN VILLAIN LAIR DESIGN: *"The main guy in this film, Winters, lives in a huge Art Deco-inspired building. I started this image by using a very dark photo plate of clouds. By doing this, I set the mood right from the start. To further illustrate the height of this building, only the very top floors are bathed in light"* © *Imagi Films*

> Concept artists require a strong understanding of the fundamentals: perspective, lighting, composition, values...





TRANSFORMERS THE MOVIE, STARSCREAM 2: *"Here is an example of one of the reasons why Photoshop is so powerful. To capture the details necessary for Starscream, we had to present the final image in extremely high resolution. As detail levels increased, I simply increased the resolution size accordingly – something that can only be done digitally"* © Bayfilms

TRANSFORMERS THE MOVIE, STARSCREAM 1 (LEFT): *"This was the second design pass on Starscream. Before applying any rendering, we usually show clients a fairly tight drawing to illustrate the overall design. Once this was completed, we moved on to the rendering itself"* © Bayfilms

He continues: "My training at ACCD was a crucial step in obtaining these skills. Just as with FZD, 50 per cent of my education concentrated on the fundamentals. I was taught everything from a scientific point of view. For example, instead of saying something is dark or light, we understood how light rays travel through space and drop off in intensity as they reach our eyes. The distance in which we see something can greatly affect the dark or light level of an object. This same type of scientific approach is applied to perspective, composition, etc.

"The other half of our education was focused on visual development. We studied animals, vehicles, cities, biological forms, and basically anything that exists on this planet and beyond. This knowledge was then stored directly into our visual library. The more you know about the world, the easier it is to design."

The digital world has also played a sound part in FZD's production efforts. A decade ago, concept work was grounded predominantly in traditional media – pen and paper the weapons of choice. However, the concept industry moves quickly in time with technological advancements, thus, so do designs and project time management. "These days, it's very hard to find concept designers who don't work in Photoshop," admits Zhu. "Photoshop is 100 per cent critical to my workflow. I start most of my design sketches on a huge canvas, usually 5,000 x 5,000 pixels. I can just sketch in any direction without constraints. This is the beauty of working digitally – there are no limits to your paper size. Once I have a design I like, I crop the canvas and balance the composition. Next, I usually do several very quick passes on how I will render the design.

DIGITALISATION

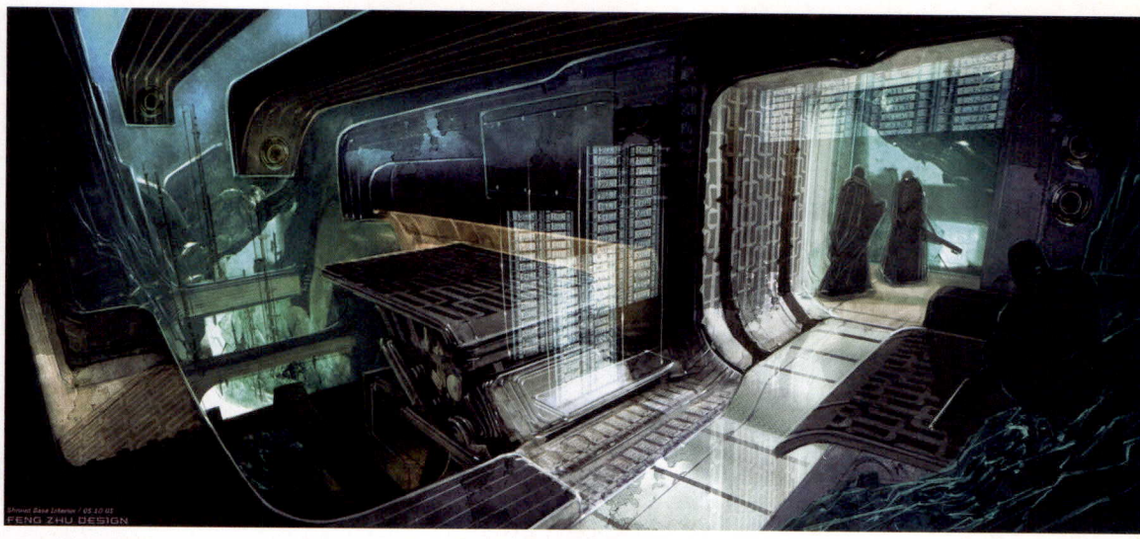
Drawing wise, Zhu works in Full Screen mode in Photoshop. "Pressing the 'F' key twice, I can pan around the image by holding down the Spacebar. This is a huge advantage because it means that I can keep my hand on the Wacom in the same location. If I want to work on the corner of a

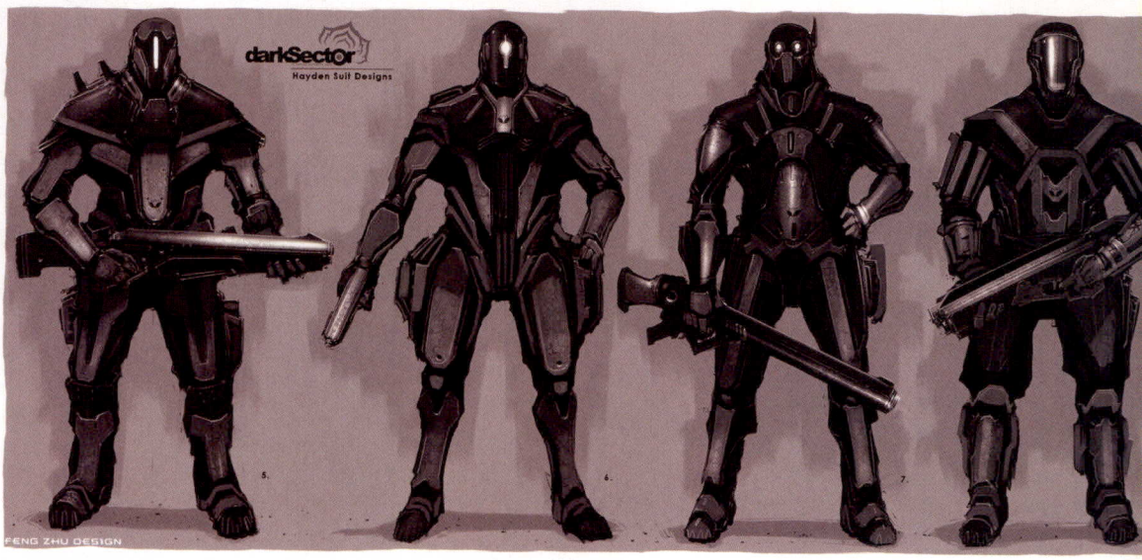
> "The more you know about the world, the easier it is to design"

TRANSFORMERS THE MOVIE, PRODUCTION PAINTING (ABOVE): *"All types of Photoshop techniques were used in this image. First, the initial line drawing was sketched out and approved by the director. Next I applied light and values. Finally, I composited a photo of my wife and I running away from the scene, adding narrative and scale as none of the actors were cast yet"* © *Bayfilms*

painting, I simply pan the corner into the centre of the screen. My hand position never moves. This might sound strange, but if you do this for a living on a daily basis for years and years, moving your hand around and trying to get to corners can cause health issues. I know many friends who have developed wrist problems as a result. By keeping my hands in the same relaxed position, I can work ten hours straight [and more] a day on the Wacom without any pain."

One of Zhu's other favourite things about working digitally in Photoshop is the ability to constantly scale up: "In a traditional drawing, the paper size is your limit. In Photoshop however, if I want to add details to something, I simply select that area, cut it out, paste it into a new canvas, increase the canvas size and paint the details. When I'm done, I resize the canvas back to the original size and Copy and Paste the selection back. This has the benefit of relaxing your eyes. You don't need to squint when working digitally." Pen and paper work may leave some artists short-sighted, but Zhu is anything but. He understands that the entertainment design industry is very lacking in Asia. The majority of the talent available





DARK SECTOR, ALIEN SPACESHIP INTERIOR (TOP): *"This image started as a very tight, black-and-white line drawing. To help better separate the interior and exterior, I played around with a light-to-dark-to-light combination"* © *Digital Extremes*

DARK SECTOR, HAYDEN SUIT DESIGNS (ABOVE MIDDLE): *"I used Photoshop to quickly sketch out a series of black silhouettes to obtain an overall design direction. After doing 12 of these sketches, I chose eight of them and extracted the details by using lighter values"* © *Digital Extremes*

GUILD WARS, IMPERIAL THRONE DESIGN (ABOVE): *"I wanted a very powerful image for one of the main bad guys for the* Guild Wars *cinematic. The pool of light works perfectly to help silhouette him in front of the staircase"* © *NCSoft*

SVEDKA VODKA, CHARACTER DESIGN (TOP): *"The final design and model of Svedka. Photoshop was used to composite the human face into the practical model built by Stan Winston Studios" © Feng Zhu Design Inc.*

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3 (ABOVE): *"An* Unreal Tournament 3 *environment design. Epic Games originally sent me a series of very quick 3D renders of geometry. I was asked to design directly on top of these renders. I decided to turn the design into a base built on the side of very tall cliffs" © Epic Games*

GUILD WARS CINEMATIC: *"A series of colour-keys illustrating the fire-breathing sequence of the bone dragon and how the lighting would be affected as a result. The original plate was rendered out roughly from Maya and painted over in Photoshop" © NCSoft*

in Asia is generally geared towards pipeline types of jobs – such as 3D modelling, rigging and texturing. "Design, on the other hand, is nearly non-existent," Zhu reveals. "It's very hard to find professional-level concept designers out here in Asia, who are original and can create marketable content." Zhu decided to fill this void with his very own design school.

The FZD School of Design is totally dedicated to training designers. The process it uses is very different from traditional art schools and reminiscent of the experiences Zhu has built up from over a decade of work. In fact, art is not even a word the School uses.

"We train students to become professional designers who not only draw well, but also understand the fundamentals behind their drawings," he tells us. "Our training comes down to several key factors. The first and most important are the fundamentals. We teach students to understand the world from a scientific and mathematical way. For example, many students learn about perspective, but rarely do they use it on a day-to-day basis. Here, the use of perspective is required on all subjects. It doesn't matter if it's an organic creature or a vehicle – if it can exist in three-dimensional space, then perspective must be applied in the drawing. This same approach is carried out for all foundation skills."

RENOVATION

All classes are designed to work as one unit. Students compare side by side what each class is teaching week to week and classes are aligned to complement each other. "This type of close connection drills the information into each student. This way, they are encouraged to carry the skills learned from one class into another," Zhu

explains. "More than half of our assignments are real-world projects. Students are not only exposed to the pressure of actual deadlines and requirements, but they also gain valuable experience working with established studios. Currently, our students have just wrapped up two big projects – one is a feature film and the other is an entertainment product."

By treating students like professionals, their entire attitude changes. Zhu is showing great diligence by promoting an overall environment that is very professional and efficient, nurturing a new generation of Asian designers. He is equally as astute when it comes to his own style – or rather the absence of one. Unlike art, which sometimes can be defined by style, his design tries to rely more on project-to-project substance. "We designers are problem-solvers," he says, "and every design problem is different. We can't stick to a certain style unless we want our career path to be extremely narrow and pigeonholed. Instead, we focus on understanding the world and how everything works. By doing so, we can tackle many of the design problems out there. For example, I can go from designing a spaceship to a Disney toy in the same day. If I were to stick with my own style, I certainly wouldn't be where I am today. I pride myself on the ability to create new ideas and marketable designs. I rarely care about the style or persona behind it."

> "Designers are problem-solvers, and every design problem is different"

GUILD WARS CINEMATIC, ART DIRECTION: *"These were a series of colour-keys – painted-over Maya renders to help the 3D lighting department. The main focus here was to extract the subject matter by using light. By working in Photoshop, we were able to try many lighting scenarios in a short space of time"* © *NCSoft*

Having already solved so many design problems – both personally and socially on an international scale – how many more challenges does the future hold for Zhu and his progressive visions? "I'm currently very busy with another newly formed studio based in Singapore called Glasmos," he tells us. "This is a joint venture between myself and Ban Y J, the original founder of STIKFAS toys. Glasmos is an original content creation studio and our first project, 'Metalgraves', will be hitting the market sometime this year. I can't reveal too much about it yet, but you'll hear more by this summer. In addition, my studio is also busy with several other high-profile projects. Unfortunately, in our business, we can't talk about them until they're released." But, surely, any projects in which Zhu has had a multi-talented hand are well worth waiting for. Keep your eyes peeled for the latest developments and updates at Zhu's website.

www.fengzhudesign.com

Insight

AMORPHOUS NIGHTMARE: *"I wanted to create a mysterious feeling for this character. She stands in the mist and the light hits her armour to bring her out of the darkness"*

PURPLE GAZE: *"Portrait rendering is always fun, however, it remains challenging. It has to capture the mood that the artist wants to express with the right painting techniques"*

FINDING MY WAY: *"This is an attempt to portray the complexity of human life. It is a dynamic macrocosm of countless interactions. Familiar places are estranged by distance and time; foreign places are engraved in the memory by unexpected turns of events; lives are fated to cross, intertwine and part; faces that laughed and cried; smiles turn into daggers; tears warm both the heart and soul"*

Donglu Yu

Website: http://donglu-littlefish.cgsociety.org/gallery/
Exposure: Featured in Exposé 5 and EXOTIQUE 5, Gnomon Workshop contest winner

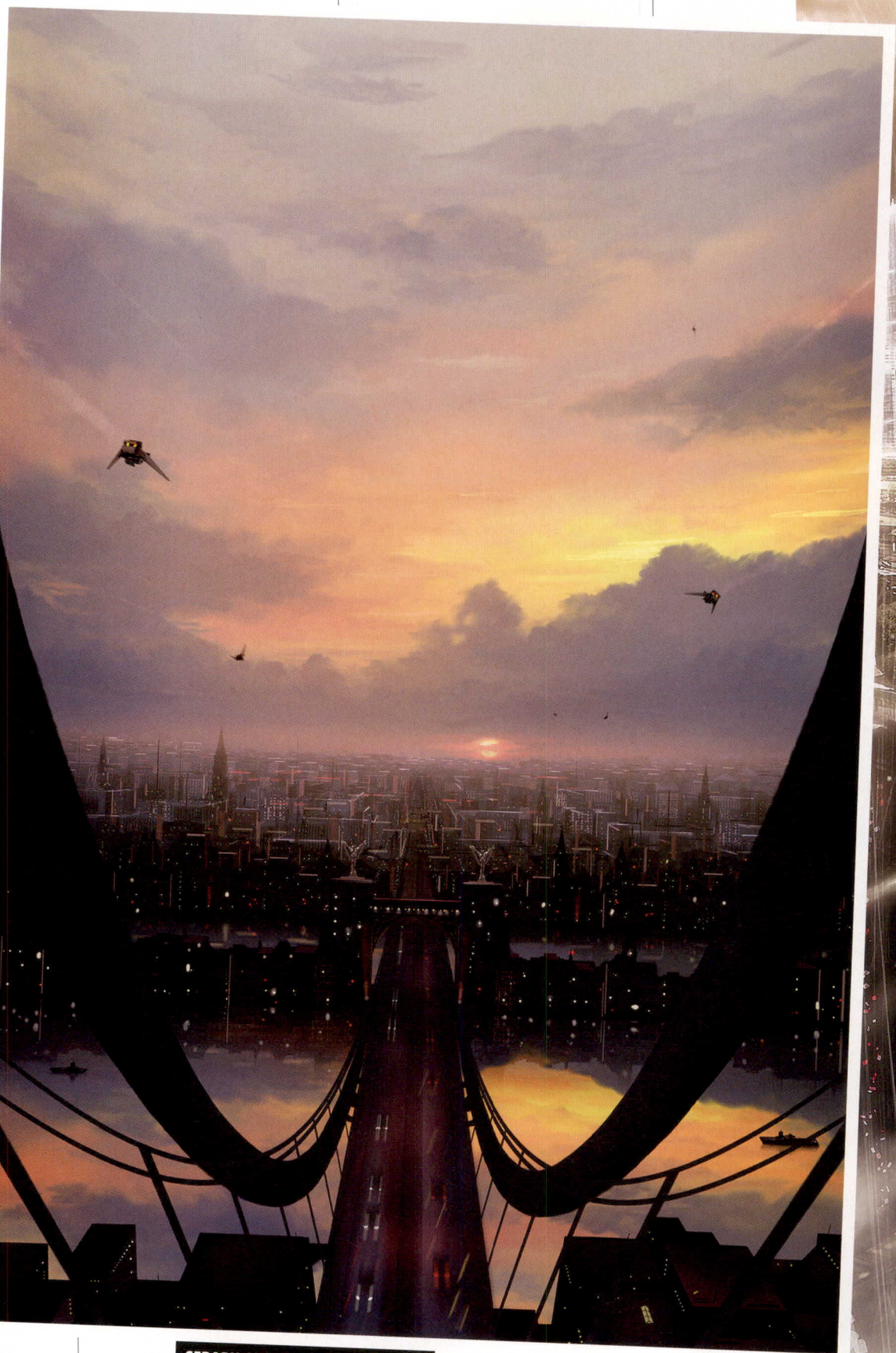
Donglu Yu was born in China, but immigrated to Canada when she was 12 years old. Her parents encouraged Yu in her artist endeavours, sending her to classes in Chinese watercolour, calligraphy and oil painting as a child, but it was only after she finished high school that she thought about taking up art as a career, enrolling in an Illustration and Design college course.

Yu then took on a Film Animation course at university, as she describes: "During those years I had lot of freedom to explore different animation styles, including cel animation, stop motion and 3D animation. Those years of study helped me enormously in expanding my artistic knowledge and solidified my career goal to become a digital artist."

Nowadays, Yu works for Eidos Interactive in Montreal as a concept artist, but she still keeps up with her personal projects. Yu started out with traditional tools but now works digitally; she believes that an understanding of art is essential regardless of the tools that are used, as she says: "Digital tools are not magic tools. Artists who can efficiently control and use those tools are the ones who firmly grasped the fundamentals of the aesthetic principals." However, Yu still relies on her traditional skills, as she explains: "I like to draw loose thumbnails or to do pencil studies. Photoshop kicks in during the colouring phase. This way, I can alter the colours, the scale of my elements within the composition and the type of lighting in a few minutes."

Her images still display her Chinese heritage, as Yu confirms when she talks about her influences: "I've been significantly influenced by both Oriental and occidental cultures. I always mix different cultural elements to create something unique and different."

Insight



SERAPH CITY: *"At first glance it looks like a beautiful cityscape, but looking further into it a more constrictive dystopia works its way in. The iron angels watching over the city hint at an oppressive state"*

Martin Bland

Website: www.spyroteknik.com
Clients: Lexus, Surface Magazine, Embryo Records, Fetus Records, AMG2, Heaven and Hell Records

We were excited to discuss the impressive conceptual art portfolio updates with inspirational artist Martin Bland. With a style best described as dark and moody, he reveals his excitement at his latest prosperity in the poster art market: "The variables between my average work and those that people buy for their walls threw up a lot of challenges. It was a massive learning experience. The research I did on trends and colour choices was invaluable."

Bland has made a lot more inroads in the commercial arena, as he says: "I'm currently working on another album cover. It's great going nuts on a 12 x 12cm square, and nice to see designs on shelves at the end of it. I've also had good contact with large publishing houses about the possibility of novel covers, which is really exciting as their client lists are awe-inspiring. It's early days but I'm hoping that it pays off."

It's more of the same when applying Photoshop and continuing his poignant style: "I've always preferred the simpler approach, and Photoshop's brush engine makes the job easy for me with pure painting. It's all about getting the idea out onto canvas quickly, so sketching and painting directly in Photoshop is natural – it's the only software I've ever had an affinity with."

As for featuring in digital art magazines, Bland only has encouraging things to say to aspiring contributors: "It played a major part in my work being seen in my own country; recognition has not been a problem overseas, but I've been relatively unknown in the UK. I've received a lot of messages of both support and a technical nature from people who read the issues to this day, and I can only imagine what it may bring in the future."

QUIXOTIC: *"Starting out as a simple three-point perspective grid, I wanted to challenge myself a little and pull off a large-scale cityscape without the aid of reference or 3D – a magical future Utopia"*

DREAMCATCHER: *"A portrait of my wife. I went in strong in terms of symbolism and symmetry, creating an iconic feel that balances and draws attention to the centre focal point"*

Tutorial

Start image

PAINT WITH DYNAMIC BRUSHES

Painting a portrait illustration in Photoshop needn't be daunting, especially if you let the brushes take the strain

When it comes to digital painting, Photoshop has a wealth of brushes that can make the process of painting much easier. But it's not all about what kind of effect they can produce and whether the strokes they make look like chalk or oils, as one of the most important aspects of using brushes in Photoshop is using them in a way that takes a lot of the work out of painting, and that's what we're going to explore here. Over the next few pages we're going to discover how to create a portrait illustration using a photographic reference as its base, but more importantly how to adapt and use Photoshop brushes to quickly render the different textures and surfaces within the illustration. Even some of the most basic brushes can be adjusted in such a way that they can be used to quickly paint skin, eyebrows, eyelashes and hair, and we'll use some more obscure brushes to spice up the background and other areas.

If you're not too confident about digital painting then this might just be one of those projects where you'll really surprise yourself with the result. So fire up Photoshop and let the brushes take the strain!

Our expert

Tim Shelbourne
www.tjshelbourne.co.uk

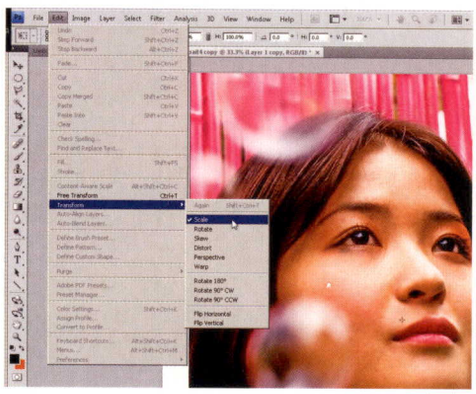
Trained as a traditional artist, Tim Shelbourne made the switch to digital many years ago and now specialises in both Photoshop and Painter. Tim is also a regular contributor to **Photoshop Creative** magazine.

Source files

We've used a photograph as the base for this illustration, which you can download from iStockphoto.com, image number '1938307', but you can work on any portrait image.

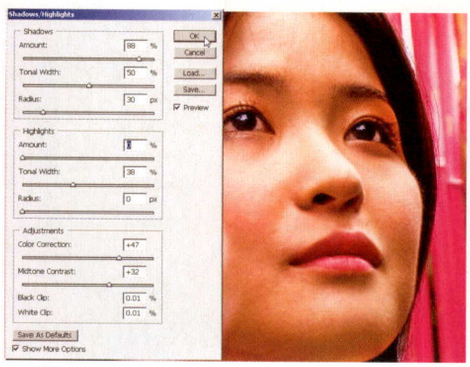
1 Reference layer

Open your chosen start image, and copy and paste it into a new file (our file measured 235 x 300mm). Position the layer as shown in the screenshot. You can easily adjust the size via Edit>Transform>Scale and Shift-dragging on one of the corner handles.



2 Tonal adjustments

Although we're only using this image as a base for the final illustration, we need to adjust the tone and colour in the image so, on the image layer, go to Image> Adjustments>Shadows/Highlights. Use the settings shown in the screenshot. This will give the tonal contrast of the image a bit of a boost.



3 Simplify the detail

We don't want any kind of photographic artefacts showing here, so the detail in the image needs to be simplified a little – and the Surface Blur filter is ideal for this. Go to Filter>Blur>Surface Blur. Use a Radius of 28 and a Threshold of 21, before clicking OK to apply the filter to your image.

I'm forever blowing bubbles!

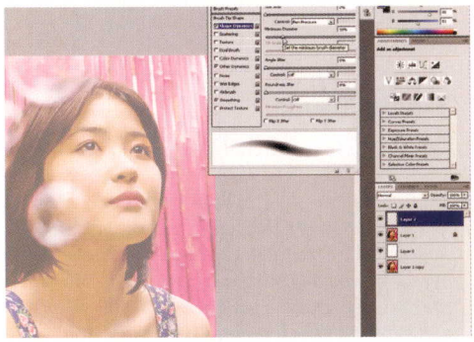
The bubbles are optional here, but they do add a lovely final flourish! To create a bubble, first make a selection using the Elliptical Marquee tool on a new layer, and then hit the layer mask button at the base of the Layers palette. Set the blending mode for this layer to Screen. Use a large, soft brush with White at a low Opacity around the outer edges of the bubble, through the hole in the mask. Now duplicate this layer, and go to Select>All and hit the Backspace key to clear it. Change the blending mode to Overlay. Now paint onto this layer, within the bubble, in circular strokes using bright mauves, greens and blues. Use a hard brush with White to add some sharp highlights. Now you can merge these two layers together, and duplicate and position each new layer for each additional bubble using Edit>Transform>Scale to resize each one. We suggest you experiment with the blending modes for each separate bubble layer (Pin Light is a really good one to use!).

Tutorial

> Using the brush at around 30 pixels, start to loosely sketch over the main outlines in the portrait – beginning with the outlines of the hair, face and shoulders

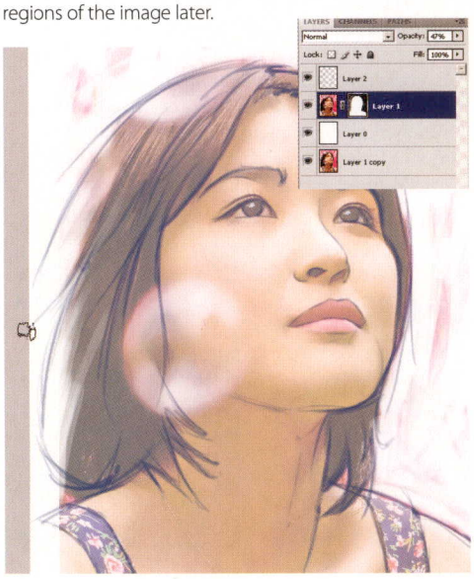
6 Choose a brush

Reduce the Opacity of the image layer to 50% and click the padlock in the Layers palette to lock it. Now add a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N). Choose the Brush tool, click in the Brush Picker and load the Natural Brushes 2 brush library. Choose the Wet Brush 60 pixels tip. In the Brushes palette, set Opacity and Size to Pen Pressure. Set the Minimum Size of the brush to around 20%.



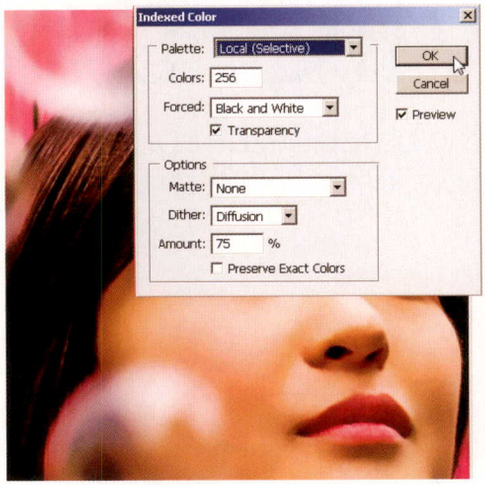
9 A little masking

Once this initial drawing is complete, return to the image layer and go to Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All. using the same brush at a larger size in black, start to paint with broad strokes over the pink background onto the layer mask. Use varying opacity to break up the outer regions of the image later.



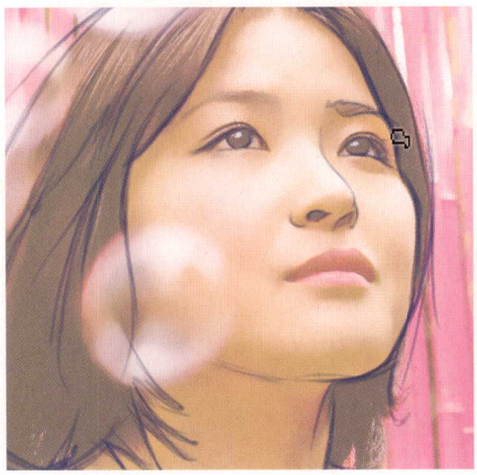
4 Create some colour swatches

It'll be very useful to make a colour set from this image to make the job of quickly choosing suitable colours quicker and easier, so go to Image>Duplicate. On the duplicated image go to Image>Mode>Indexed Color. Click OK to merge the layers. Use the settings shown and click OK.



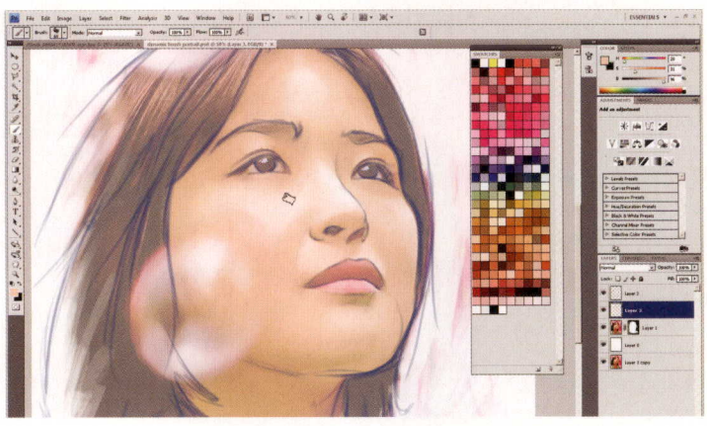
7 A loose sketch

Using the brush at around 30 pixels, start to loosely sketch over the main outlines in the portrait – beginning with the main outlines of the hair, face and shoulders. Use smooth, sweeping lines here and make use of the pressure sensitivity of the brush. Don't follow every detail, but stylise the shapes.



10 Overall skin tone

Add a new layer (making sure it's beneath the sketch layer). In the Brush Picker, load the Dry Media brush set. In the Brushes panel, set Opacity to Pen Pressure. Load your saved colour swatches and choose a midtone skin shade. Now start to lightly paint over the midtones on the face, varying your pressure and leaving the highlights visible.

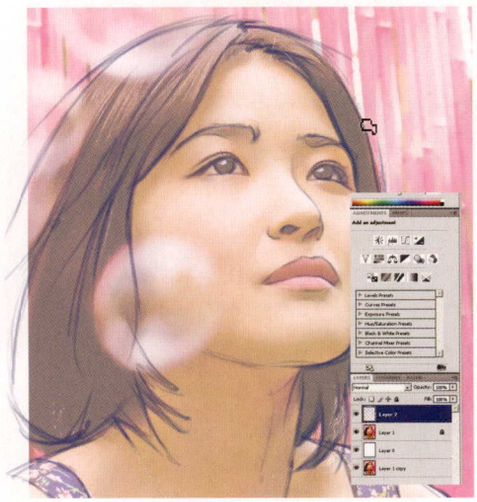


5 Duplicate elements

Still with the duplicate image, go to Image>Mode>Color Table. You'll see the custom colour swatch you just gathered displayed within the dialog box. Hit Save to save these swatches in ACT format to a convenient folder… you'll need these later! Click OK to the Color Table dialog and close the duplicated image without saving.

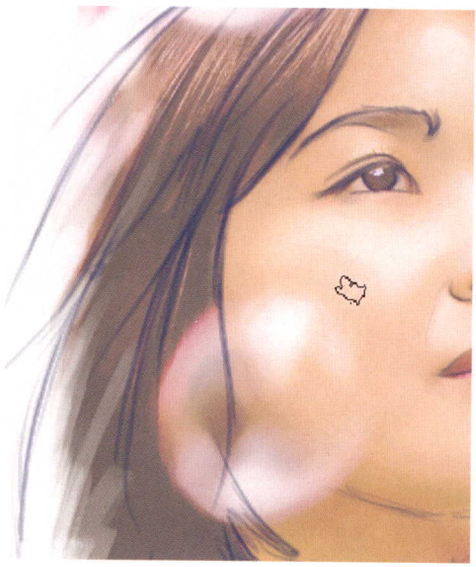
8 Building a framework

We'll possibly lose quite a bit of this layer in the final illustration, but it's a useful framework throughout the whole painting process and nicely ties everything together. Carry on with this line work over the features in the face, once again simplifying everything.



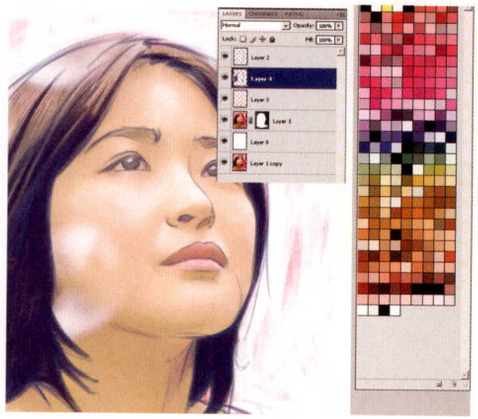
11 Subtle transitions

Because we've set the Opacity to Pen Pressure for this brush, you can carefully blend the transition between the midtones and highlights by using just a little pressure over the boundaries between these two tones. Be careful to follow the contours with your brush strokes.



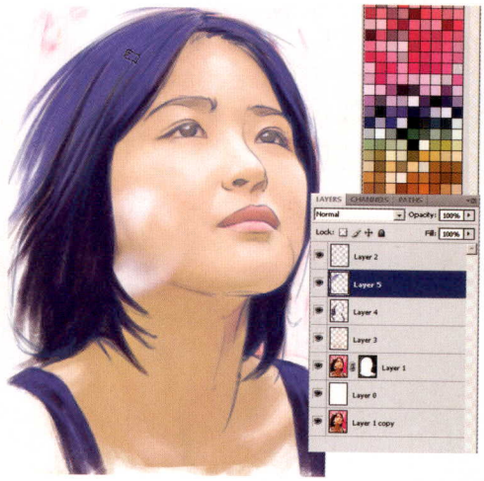
12 Hair shadows

Now add a new layer. We need to establish the shadow areas of the hair, so choose a dark blue/black. In the Brushes palette, set the Size to Pen Pressure and set Minimum Size to around 25%. Now quickly stroke in the hair using long, sweeping strokes. Remember that this stage is only underpainting, so don't get distracted by the details.



13 Some more midtones

Use the same colour to roughly block in the shoulder straps. Now choose a midtone blue/black colour. With this colour, and using the same brush at a smaller size, add the midtone areas to the hair. Once again, use expressive, flowing strokes here.

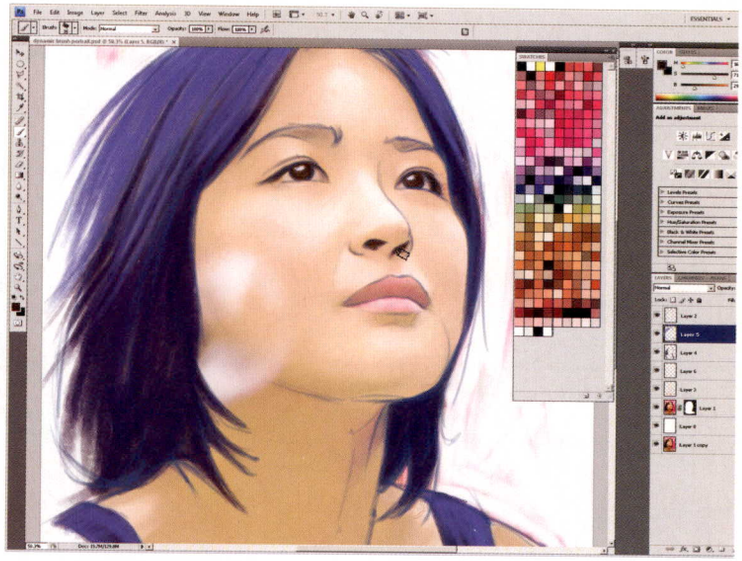


Quick tip

Once you have the face pretty much established, you can easily modify the skin tone by adding an adjustment layer at the top of the layer stack. Use a Photo Filter adjustment layer here, unchecking Preserve Luminosity. One of the Warming filters is ideal. Fill the adjustment layer's mask with black and then paint over the face with white to reveal the adjustment.

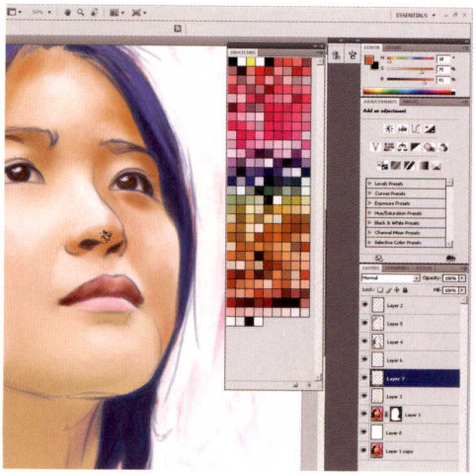
14 Vital darks

Next, with very dark browns, you can begin to establish the darks in the eyes and the nostrils, which will help to create realistic depth in your facial structure. Establishing these dark tones will help you to judge the tones that we'll be adding next too. Carefully use the brush at a small size here with short strokes, following the shapes carefully as you go. Zoom in to the areas as needed so that you can work at close range.



15 Watch that skin tone!

Reset your brushes in the Brush Picker and choose the smallest of the Spatter brushes. In the Brushes palette, set Minimum Size to 40% and set Opacity to Pen Pressure. In the Options bar, set the Opacity for the brush to 30%. Choose a shadow colour for the skin and start to lightly brush in the shadow areas. Use the finished image as a guide here.



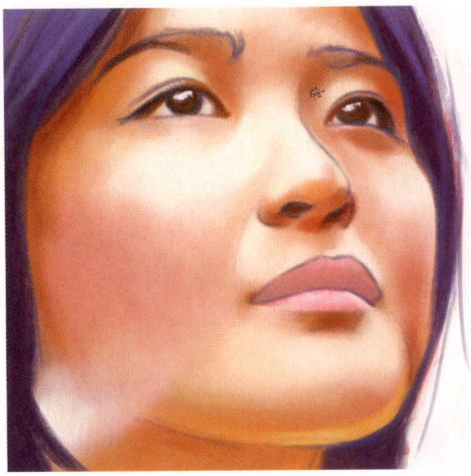
16 Build up slowly

It's important to build these tones up smoothly and gently, working over the darkest areas repeatedly to build the tone. Vary the colour with some slightly warmer tones around the cheeks. Observation is key here, and you need to identify the shadow tones that define the form and place them accurately.

> Because we've set the Opacity to Pen Pressure for this brush, you can carefully blend the transition between the midtones and highlights by using just a little pressure over the boundaries between these two tones

Tutorial

17 **Define that form!**
Notice the darker, warmer tones beneath the base of the nose? These are really important to build form and three-dimensionality, so use the brush at a much smaller size for these, and for the dark areas that define the upper eyelids. Subtlety is the key here, as this image needs to be quite delicate and high key.

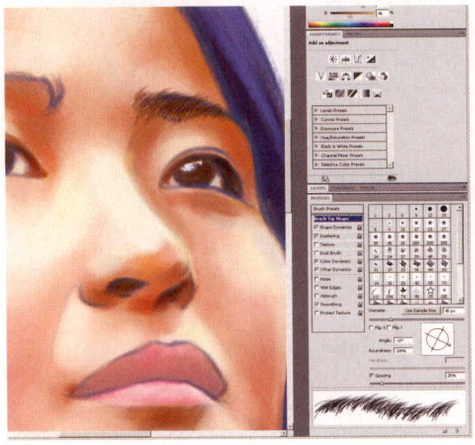


18 **Vital highlights**
Highlights are important here to convey form convincingly. Use the same Spatter brush for these on another layer, using a very light skin shade (not white). Once again, build the highlights gradually with gentle brushing. The very lightest highlights are along the nose. To produce a smooth effect on the broad areas of the face, use gentle circular motions with your brush.

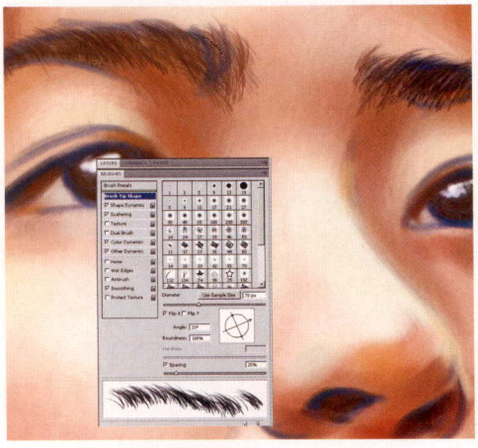
19 **Eyebrow brush!**
Add another layer and, from the Brush Picker, choose the Dune Grass brush. This brush is ideal for the eyebrows, but it needs a little setting up. In the Brushes panel (F5) set the Size Control to Pen Pressure and set Size Jitter to 2%. Set the Angle Control to Off and Angle Jitter to 4%. In Other Dynamics, set Opacity Control to Pen Pressure.

> Highlights are important to convey form convincingly. Use the Spatter brush for these, using a very light skin shade. Once again, build the highlights gradually with gentle brushing

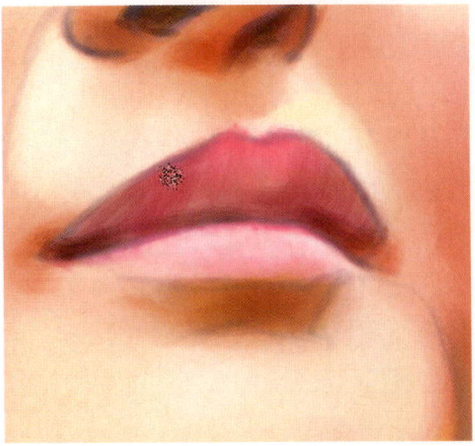
20 **Clever brushes!**
Adjust the angle of the brush in the Brush Tip Shape section of the Brushes panel and tweak the Spacing a little. Adjust the Brush Size to fit the widest part of the eyebrows and choose two shades of dark brown for the foreground and background swatches. Now paint in the right eyebrow, varying your pressure.



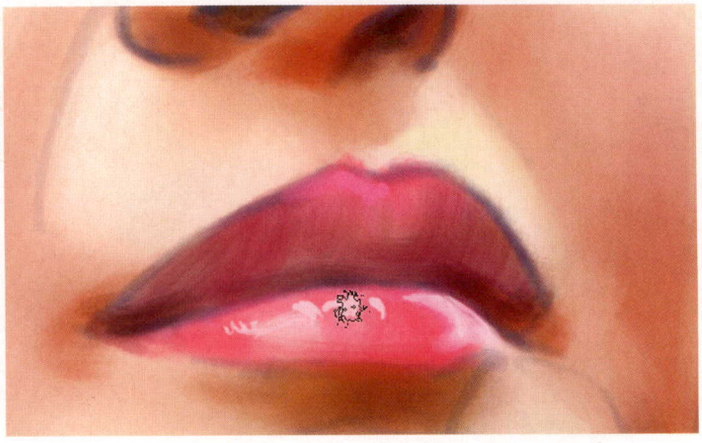
21 **Flip and repeat**
In the Brushes panel (Brush Tip Shape), check the Flip X option and adjust the brush angle a little to paint in the other eyebrow. It's best to slowly build up the eyebrows with various shades of brown. You can always adjust the Opacity of this layer a little to make the eyebrows more subtle.



22 **Getting lippy!**
To paint the all-important eyes here, refer to the boxout over the page. When these are done, choose the Spatter brush again and carefully paint in the top lip with a dark pink, following the contour of the lip itself. You can easily add the highlight section in the middle by adding short strokes of lighter pink.



23 **Add some highlights**
The bottom lip is quite simple. Start by brushing within the shape using a quite vibrant, mid-toned pink. On top of this add some subtle streaks of lighter pink (using the finished image for reference) to give the lip some form. For the sharp, bright highlights, change to a standard hard round brush and place these in very carefully with a very light shade.

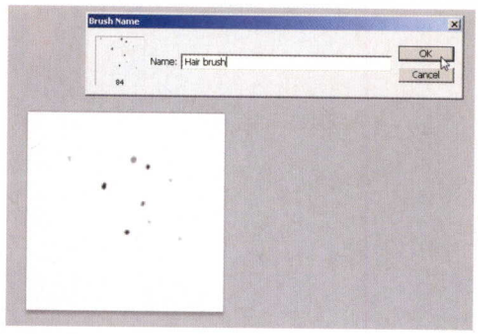


24 Brush canvas

To clarify and add more detail to the hair, we're going to create a custom dynamic brush. Go to File>New and create a new document at 96dpi, measuring 120 pixels square, with a white background. Now use a small, hard brush to add a few small dots across this canvas at varying opacities, as shown in the screenshot below.

25 A custom preset

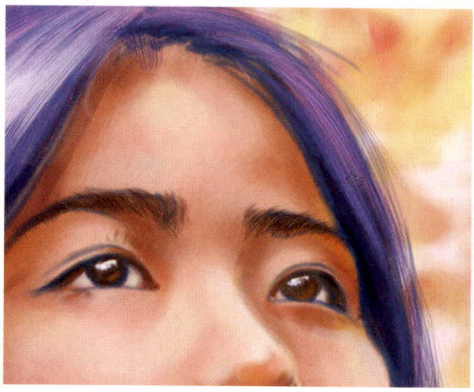
Go to Edit>Define Brush Preset. Give your new brush a name and click OK. You'll now find your brush in the Brush Picker. Choose it and, in the Brushes Panel, set Minimum Size to 20% and Size Control to Pen Pressure. Set Spacing to 0 and set the Opacity Control to Pen Pressure.



> To clarify and add more detail to the hair, we're going to create a custom dynamic brush. Go to File›New and create a new document at 96dpi, measuring 120 pixels square, with a white background.

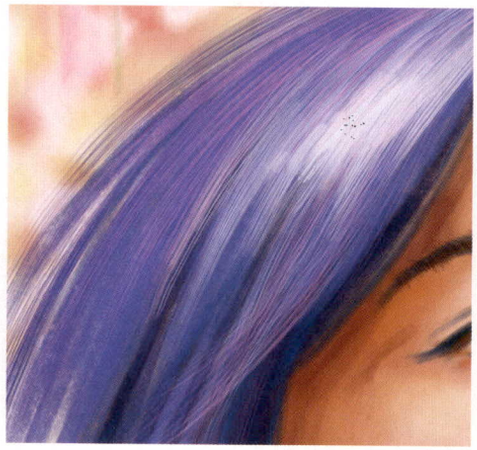
26 Fine locks

Hold down the Opt/Alt key and sample the lighter colour in the hair. Click the Foreground swatch and choose a lighter tone from the Color Picker. Now use this brush to start adding flowing strands and detail to the hair, following the form. Use smooth, flicking motions here, and make sure to break up any hard outlines around the hair silhouette.



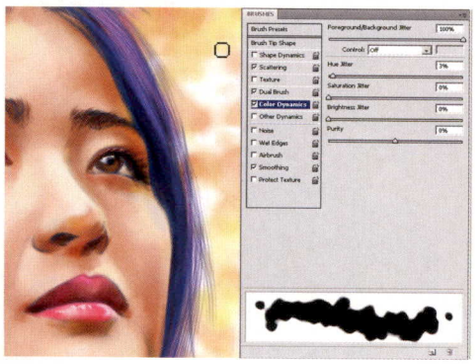
27 Hair highlights

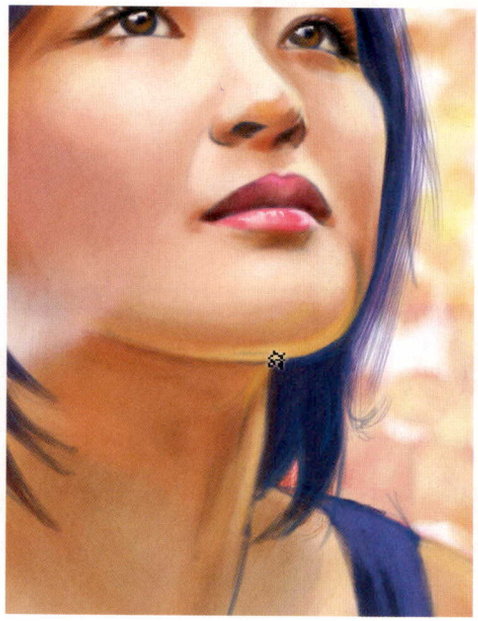
Choose a highlight colour for the hair (not white), reduce the size of the brush and stroke in some highlights toward the top of the head. Once these are in place, you can add some very fine touches of near-white to add the final highlighted strands.



28 Drippy background

For the background, load the Wet Media brush set. Choose the Drippy Water brush from the Brush Picker. In the Brushes panel, via Color Dynamics, increase Foreground/Background Jitter to 100%. Choose two colours for the foreground and background swatches. Click the original image layer, add a new layer and paint with the brush to create the background.





The eyes have it!

Painting the eyes in this illustration is not as difficult as you might think. The trick here is to keep things simple. Using our Spatter brush, block in the iris using a very dark brown, and then place in the pupil using pure black. You can also add some of this black along the top of the iris, just under the upper eyelid. Remember to use the brush with pressure-driven Opacity so that you can build these tones up gradually.

Carefully add a stroke of light hazel brown around the iris, towards the outer edge, to give the iris some depth and light. Once more, using the brush at a small size with a warm, dark colour, define the upper eyelids where they surround the eye.

For the eyelashes, set the Size control for the brush to Pen Pressure and use short, swift flicks of the wrist. Add pure white catch lights to the eyes with a very small hard brush.

29 Review and refine

Now is a good time to review your painting and see if there are any additional tweaks that need to be made to get the image finished. On a final layer at the top of the stack, refine the highlights on the face with the Spatter brush. It's also effective at this stage to add some touches of light, very warm colours on the jaw line and the underside of the nose. When you're happy, save the image!

SEQUENTIAL ART

Create comic-style artwork images that work together to form a narrative

In this tutorial, we will learn how to take a pencilled comic book page and paint it using Photoshop to give it the feel of a traditional, acrylic painting. A basic knowledge about digital painting and rendering is needed to complete this exercise, and it will help to be familiar with how painting has been combined with the sequential art form over the years. Having examples of painted comics nearby will both inspire and anchor our vision of what the completed page could look like.

There are many different techniques when it comes to painting comics. This tutorial takes what we know about digital painting and combines it with visual storytelling. You will learn how to embellish a scene from a story or script with the use of colour and dramatic lighting, as well as creating unique and convincing magical special effects.

We learn of a painting technique that utilises various brush presets combined with the Smudge tool to render and paint everything from figures to stone and wispy clouds. We will also explore the possibilities of incorporating traditionally painted textures into our digital painting. Plus, don't forget to bring along your imagination!

Our expert

Douglas Sirois
www.dougsirois.com

Douglas is an illustrator who has a hand in comic books, concept art for film as well as illustration for children's books.

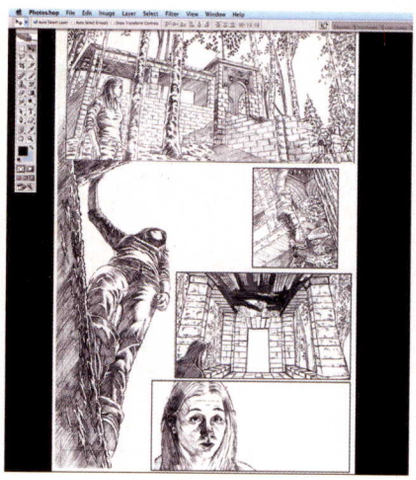
Source files

On the CD, you will find the sample comic page drawn by me as well as the energy burst artwork for panels 4 and 5 and some traditionally created textures.

> "Having examples of painted comics nearby will anchor your vision of what the final page could look like"

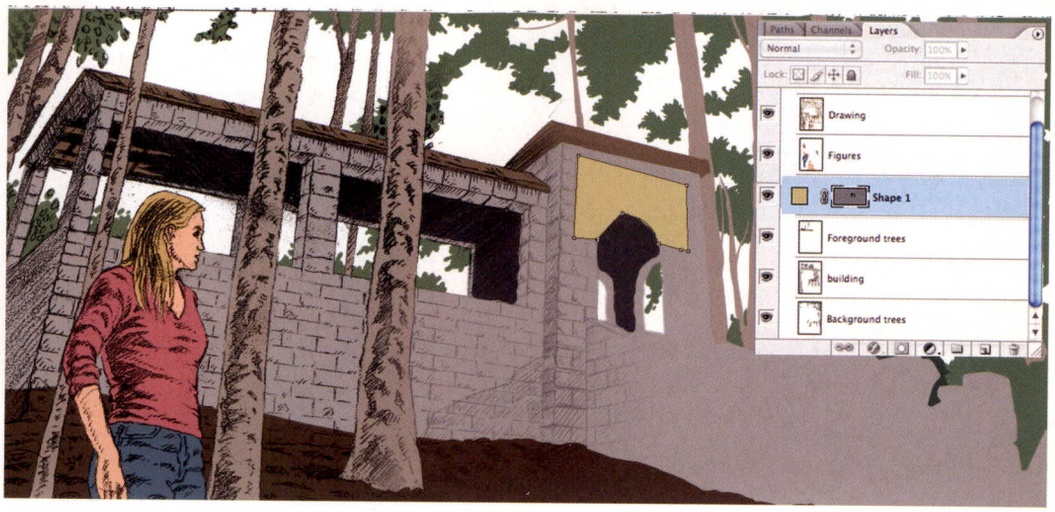
01 Preparing your line work

When you first open your pencilled page in Photoshop, set the blending mode of the layer to Multiply and ensure it is the top layer for the first half of this tutorial. Setting your line work to Multiply allows you to see what you are working on underneath.



02 Flatting in local colour

Use the Pen tool to colour every object on the page. Use local colour or colours that are closest to the ones you want. Flat in the figures and merge them onto one layer and do the same with background elements. Keep the layers separated by objects in the foreground, middle ground and background and label them accordingly.



Take advantage of the Smudge tool to paint

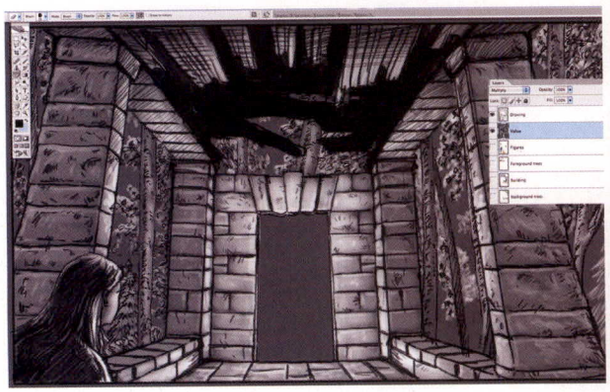
One of the most underused tools when it comes to digital painting is the Smudge tool in Photoshop. When combined with the right kind of brushes, this tool can achieve wonderful things that normal airbrushes simply can't, such as blending colours brilliantly as if you're actually using traditional acrylics or oils. You can also create brush strokes easily, which adds to the traditional feel. This tool works very well for rendering if you are trying to achieve a look that is more painted than realistic. One of the most commonly overlooked features is the ability to add colour to the Smudge tool by clicking on the checkbox that says Finger Painting. With the increase or decrease of the Smudge brush strength, we can apply more or less colour at any time. When exploring this technique, try and use brushes that have more texture than the smooth, round or airbrush options as these will give you more brush strokes. The Smudge tool with Finger Painting is particularly good when painting clouds as it has the range to create light, wispy clouds or more clumpy and soft cumulous-style clouds.

03 Exploring value and lighting

Create a new layer below the line work layer, fill it with 75% grey and set to Multiply. Hide all flatted colour layers but use the flatted layers as selections, erasing highlights using the Airbrush Pen Opacity brush at 70%. (NB: This brush is very receptive to your graphic tablet pen's pressure.) Erase areas where you'd expect light to hit the forms.

04 Establishing a light source

While still in the values stage, you have the opportunity to establish your light sources. In this panel, there will be a burst of magical energy in front of the doorway. The ruined hallway will be lit from the centre with supernatural light hitting the pillars and deteriorating ceiling boards. When developing the values, keep in mind your light source and always consider each form to have a light and a dark side.



05 Colour your values

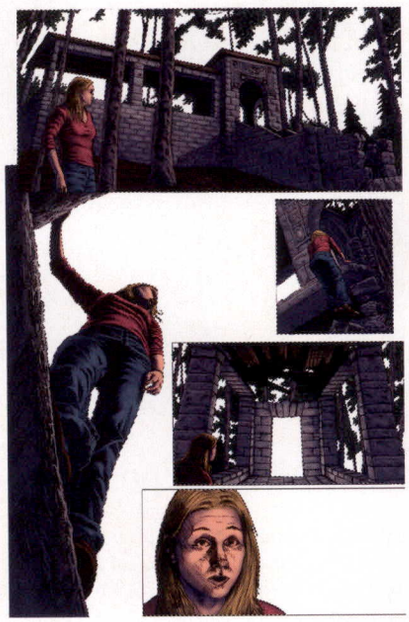
Now use Variations to add colour to your value work. You'll find the Variations controls under Image>Adjustments. Choose a muted blue shade because this will most effectively unify all of the shadows and will also, generally, add more colours to your page and the individual panels.

06 Colour your line art

In this step, we use the Variations controls in the same way as the previous one, but we will give the line art a sepia colour instead of blue. The idea behind this comes from various traditional painting techniques of developing your 'underpainting' with a sepia tone. This step also adds more colours to your palette.

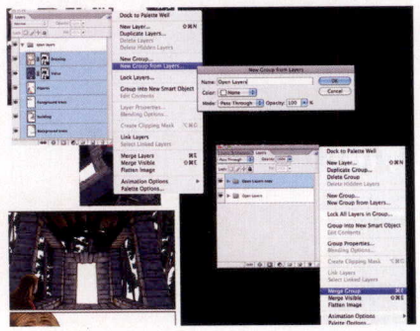
07 Masking out the sky

This is an important step, as we want to separate the forms from the sky so we can paint in the sky on its own layer. To mask out the entire sky, load the selection of each of the flatted colour layers by holding Cmd/Ctrl while clicking on each individual layer. Then click below where it says Add Vector Mask.



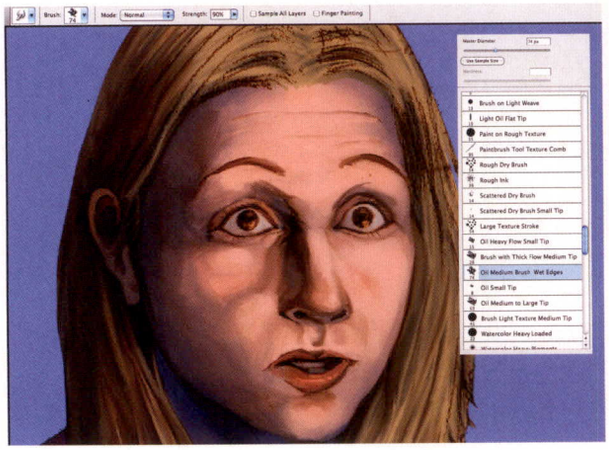
08 Merge layers for rendering

Highlight all of the layers by holding Shift and clicking the layers, then select New Group from Layers. Call this new group 'Open Layers' and duplicate it. We then select Merge Group; call this 'Working Layer'. We want to have the option to return to the Open Layers group throughout the course of this exercise.



09 Rendering the figures and faces

Here is where we have fun. With the Smudge tool and the Oil Medium Wet Edges brush set at 90%, push the pixels in a way that follows the form and blend of the line art, with the local colours and the values which you have chosen. Make sure you blend in a way which stays true to the planes of the forms.



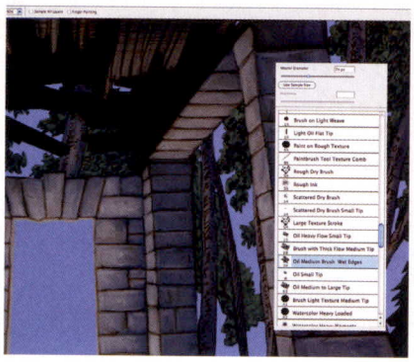
> Make sure to blend in a way which stays true to the planes of the forms

10 Creating space between foreground and background

Select the building and the background trees only. Then, on the Working Layer, use the Blur tool, which at 50% can make the building just slightly out of focus, helping to create space between the figures and the environment. Apply a bit more blur to the trees in the distance.

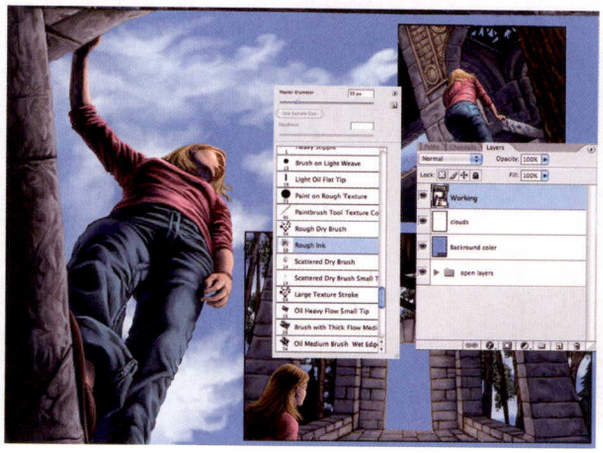
11 Rendering the background

As we rendered the figures, do the same with the stonework and background details. The trick to using the Smudge tool is to make it look like the Smudge tool wasn't used at all, but as if we have blended the colours skilfully in some traditional medium. Create the texture of the bricks by pushing the pixels, creating random grooves and indents in the stonework.



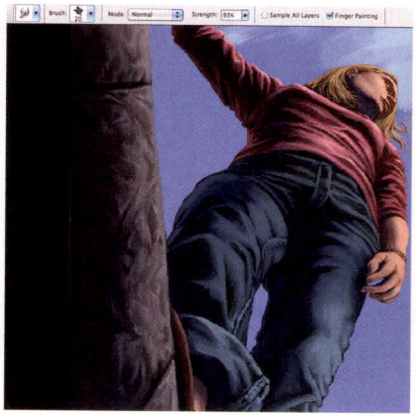
12 Painting the clouds

Create two new layers beneath your Working Layer. Fill the bottom layer with a sky blue. On the other, start to paint in a way that helps the compositional flow of the page. Use the Smudge tool and Rough Ink brush with Finger Painting activated to achieve delicate clouds. Apply a slight Gaussian Blur to help them recede into space.



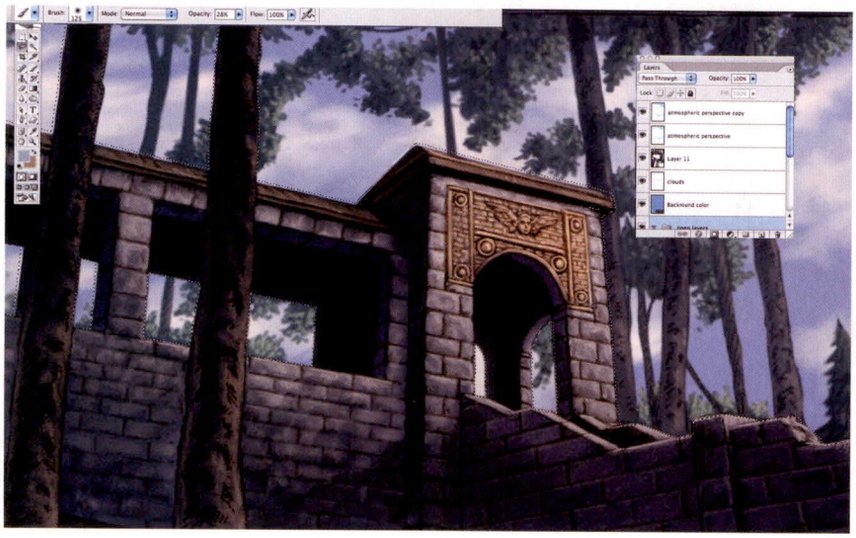
13 Painting in lighter values

Here we can use the Smudge tool again to paint in our next level of values and, ultimately, the highlights. Make sure that you check the little box next to Finger Painting. Use the Oil Medium Wet Edges brush set at 90-97% to achieve variations of application and brush strokes.



14 Apply atmospheric perspective

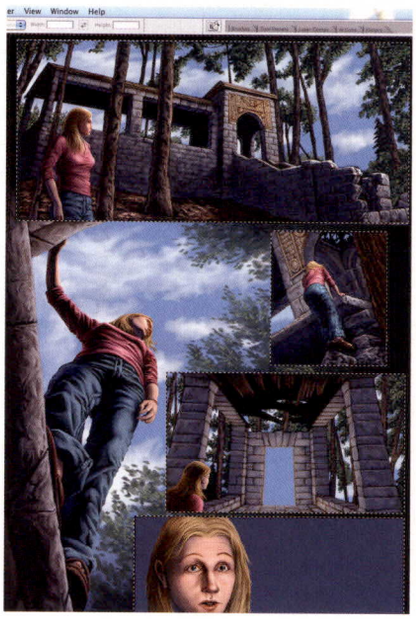
Atmospheric perspective refers to the effect that the atmosphere has on the appearance of an object as it is viewed from a distance. Select only the background trees. On a new layer, select a light blue and paint over the trees with a 25-35% Opacity. Set that layer to Hard Light. You can strengthen this effect by increasing the opacity or, alternatively, by duplicating the layer.



> Use the Smudge tool and Rough Ink brush with Finger Painting to achieve delicate clouds

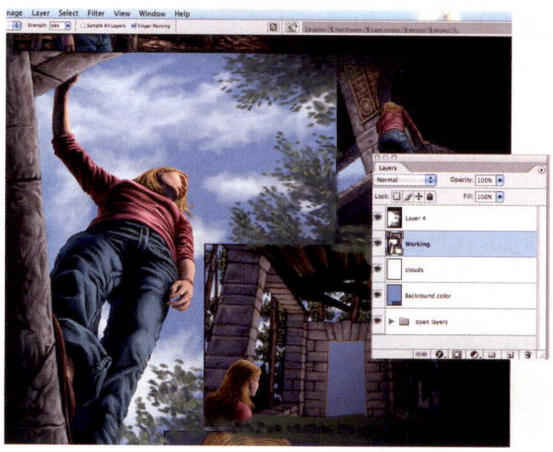
Quick tip

Make sure to use your Open Layer group files to make selections on your Working Layer. It will make this exercise easier and faster to load selections and create vector masks. You can also make colour changes easily by selecting the flat colours in your Open Layer group.



15 Painting in trees/foliage

In panel 2, there should be trees overhead, which continue behind the other panels on the page. Start with a new layer and use the Smudge tool, Finger Painting, with the Oil Medium Wet Edges brush set at 95% to paint in the leaves. Then select an Airbrush and use this to fade the trees to black around the edges of the page. Finally, you can apply a slight Gaussian Blur to help them recede into the background.

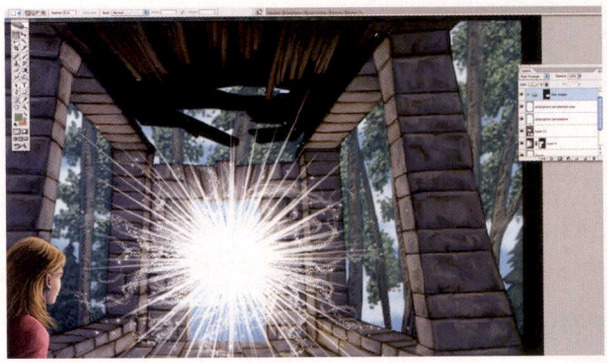


16 Mask out panels

To give the effect that the trees fade to black behind the rest of the panels, we'll need to mask out the panels. Take your tree layer and put it under your Working Layer. Now use the Rectangle Marquee tool to select each panel. Inverse the selection and add a vector mask to the layer, masking out the panels.

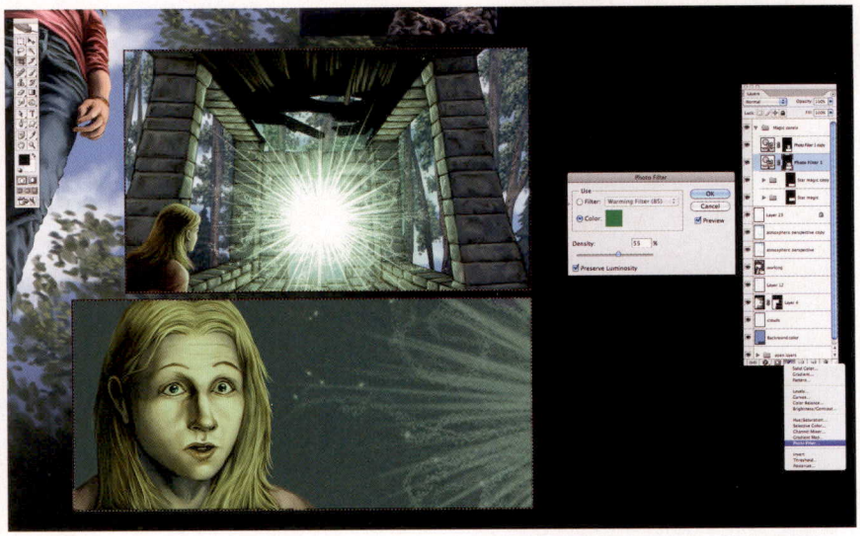
17 Creating magical bursts of energy

In panels 4 and 5, there is magical energy that lights the hallway and the girl's face. Using the file supplied on the disc, implement the magical burst of energy by dragging and transforming it into place. Now use the Rectangle Marquee tool to select the fourth panel and add a vector mask to the group, masking out everything outside of that panel. Do the same to panel 5, but transform the energy so we only see part of it.



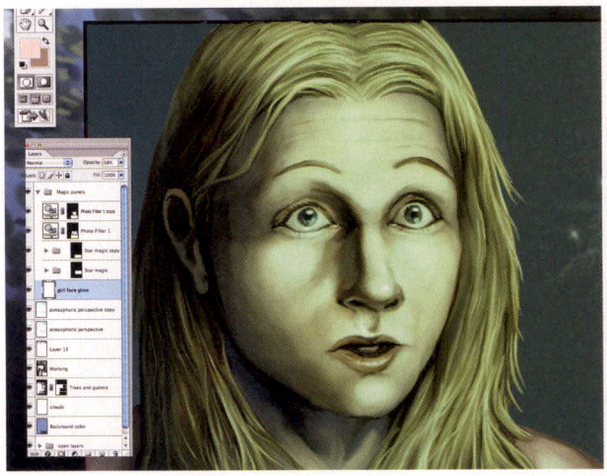
18 Adding supernatural light

Apply a Photo Filter above the 'Magical Burst' group to panels 4 and 5 by selecting them with the Rectangle Marquee tool. Choose a deep emerald green colour to reflect the forest setting of the scene. Duplicate the layer and change the blending mode to Color. Now you can paint highlights on the stones, using a very light grey and the Photo Filters above will affect it.



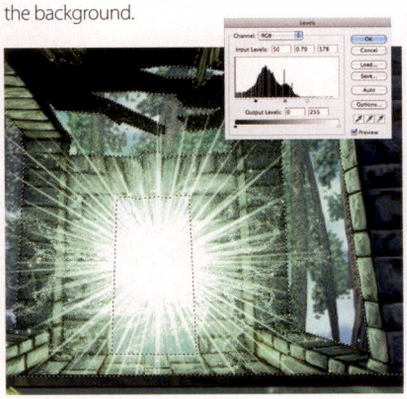
19 Highlighting the face

Since the girl is being lit by the supernatural glow of the energy burst, we should have some places where there are intense highlights on her face. On a new layer above your Working Layer, paint in highlights on her face where they would most likely appear. Also, don't forget to add some reflected light in her eyes.



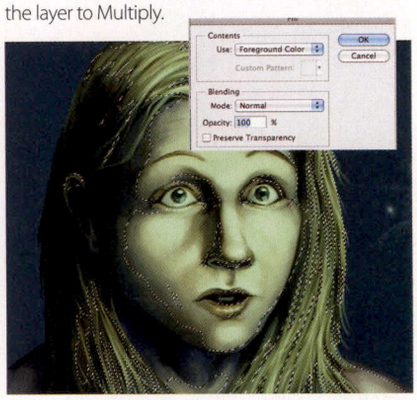
20 Punching up levels

To increase the dramatic lighting effect of the energy burst in panel 4, select only the building in panel 4, and then add an adjustment layer. Next, change levels so that the dark side of the columns are even darker. Ideally, we want to see a much stronger contrast against the trees in the background.



21 Adding colour to shadow

In panel 5, we want to make the background and the shadows on her face have a bit more contrast. To do so, in the Open Layers group, click on the values layer and load it as a selection. On a new layer, fill the selection with a shade of blue and change the blending mode of the layer to Multiply.



22 Rim light the figure

In panel 5 – so that we don't lose the back edge of the girl's hair – we can add a rim light. Create a new layer and choose a warm light colour and use the Smudge tool, Finger Painting, with the Oil Medium Wet Edges brush set at 92% to paint a rim light to help define that edge.

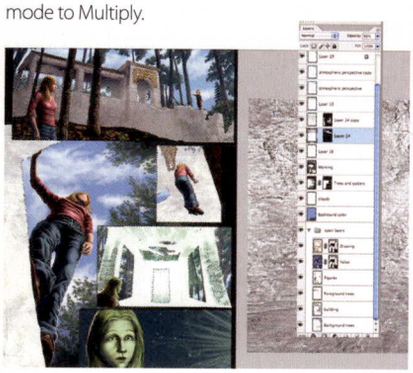
23 Highlighting the scene

At this stage, we can return to the rest of the page and punch up the contrast by adding highlights that can also help direct our gaze. Use the Smudge tool, Finger Painting, with the Oil Medium Wet Edges brush set at 92% to paint highlights on stonework and other characters.

> Since the girl is being lit by the supernatural glow of the energy burst, we should have some places where there are intense highlights on her face

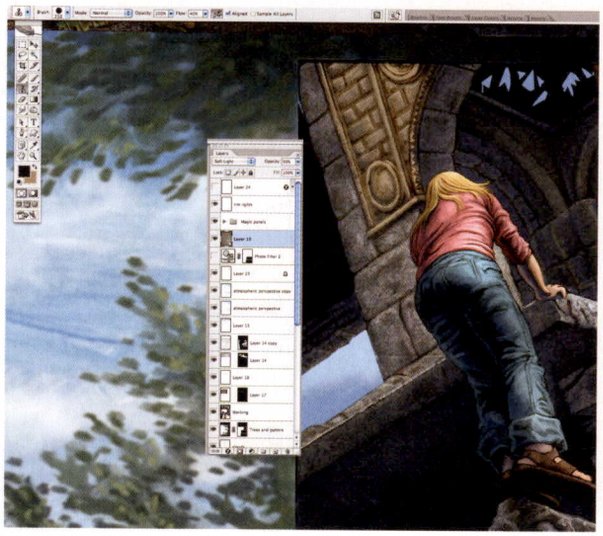
24 Importing textures

Open the file 'Canvas texture for Stonework.psd' and drag onto your comic page file to add more of a naturalistic look to the building's stonework. Stretch the texture to fit over all of the building images in the entire page. Now select only the building and, on the Canvas Texture layers, apply a vector mask. Finally, change the blending mode to Multiply.



25 Applying Canvas Texture to the page

To create the impression of a traditionally painted page, we can add a Canvas Texture effect across the whole page. Open the file 'canvas texture page.jpg' and drag it onto your comic page file. Next, you need to transform the layer so that it encompasses the entire page. The last stage of this step involves changing the blending mode to Soft Light.

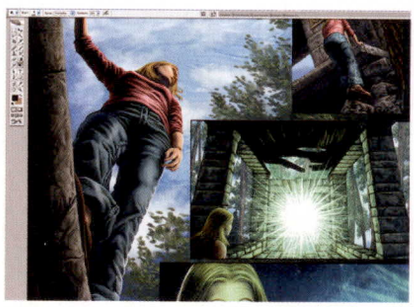


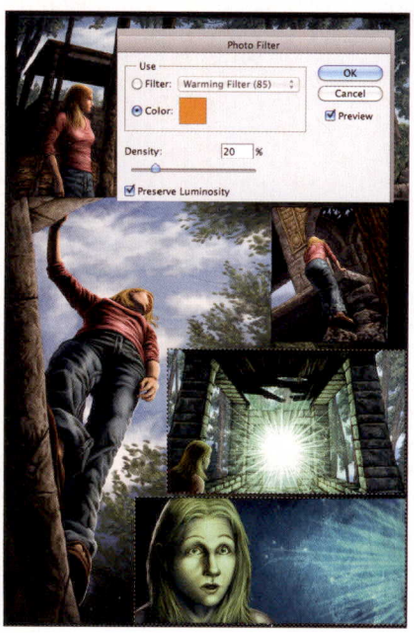
A labour of love

As you have probably realised, the truth is that painting comic book pages is a labour of love. This type of page painting is very time-consuming so if you have painted this exercise in a day, congratulations! If you choose to paint comics in this style, the trick is all in the shortcuts that can cut your time in half. Be prepared for many hours of work through the day and long into the night. Always keep in mind that the painting of a comic book or graphic novel needs to have strong drawings to work from. When composing a page, think of the best ways to move the viewer through the pages. Use dynamic camera angles to make your pages as interesting as possible and, remember, it's all in aid of the story. A great story can be hurt by poor artwork, while fantastic artwork can be hindered by a not-so-great story, so strive to find the right balance. Not every story deserves highly rendered artwork like this – just food for thought. Good luck painting and keep creating!

26 Highlighting on the canvas texture

Here is where we can add subtle highlights to the overall page with the use of the Dodge tool. Choose an Airbrush and brush over the Canvas Texture to create more contrast. Use this to punch up the highlights, always with the aim of directing the eye through the page.

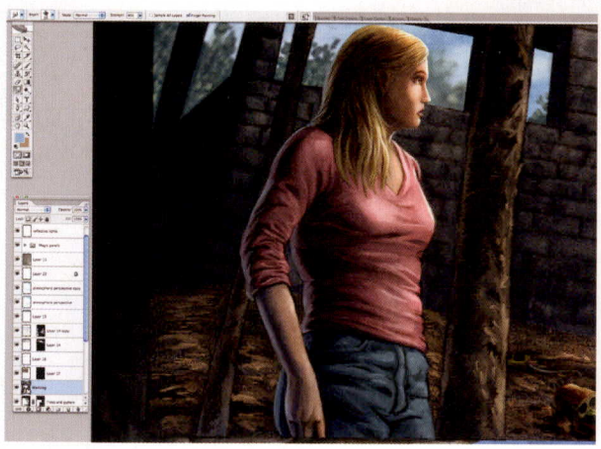


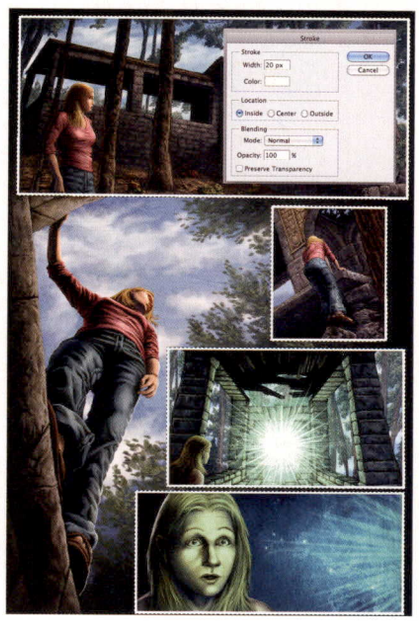


> "Apply a warm-coloured Photo Filter adjustment layer over all of the layers to unify the light, creating the illusion of authentic sunlight"

27 Reflective light

Reflective light can be added to areas of the girl where we start to lose the edge of forms. Paint this on a new layer using the Smudge tool, Finger Painting, with the Oil Medium Wet Edges brush set at 95%, eye-dropping the colour from the sky.





28 Unifying the lights

Select the entire page, with the exceptions of panels 4 and 5. Apply a warm-coloured Photo Filter adjustment layer over all of the layers to unify the light, creating the illusion of authentic sunlight. Since panels 4 and 5 already have their own light source incorporated, they will be unaffected by this step.

29 Apply panel borders

To add a finishing touch to the comic page, use the Rectangle Marquee tool to select each panel individually. Having created a new layer, use the Stroke tool (which can be found in Edit>Stroke). Make the stroke approximately 20 pixels wide and white in colour. For the Location tab, select Inside to complete the borders.

REAL-MEDIA BRUSHES

Mike Corriero talks you through the generation of a creature through multiple concepts and some handy custom brush tips

We're going to be primarily discussing aspects of creature ideation in this tutorial, while tackling custom brushes and the incorporation of photo textures in Photoshop to help manage your workflow. The ideation of creature concepts will take you through a simplistic approach of anatomy while producing a design with impact and originality. Creating custom brushes in Photoshop is simple, fun and effective. It will help in both the sketch portion of this design phase as well as the final production of the creature illustration.

Creatures have long been an interest of ours; they are a way to relax even when your mind is frustrated and you find yourself hitting a mental block. Since creatures don't exist, there are fewer rules to abide by, therefore freeing up the frustrations that may come along with proper anatomy or boring designs. Creature ideation allows you to just go wild and have fun, whether they are realistic in nature or whimsical and stylised.

Photoshop makes it very easy to create custom brushes and textures that play an integral part in producing something that looks hand painted and not overly digital. The workspace has exactly what you need to get the job done without confusing you or overpopulating your space with unnecessary options.

Our expert

Mike Corriero
www.mikecorriero.com

Mike is a freelance concept artist and illustrator for the videogame and film industries, living in NJ, USA. Currently, Corriero produces assets for various companies, including everything from creatures, environments, structures, illustrations, icons and wall tile designs. His work has been featured in a number of promotional outlets, including the Ballistic Publishing series (for instance *EXPOSÉ 4, 5* and *6*), *Official Corel Painter Magazine* and Design 360° (China).

Source files

The files on the disc include a line work file, custom brush, pattern and photo texture files. There are also files for some of the preliminary thumbnail stages.

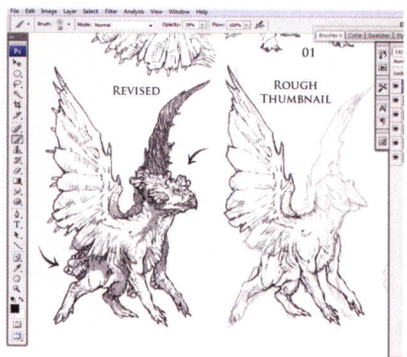
1 Thumbnail designing

Thumbnails are such an important part in conceptual design. If you're working on designing something, you're going to need to go through multiple phases and variations. Once you become comfortable with sketching at a small scale and focusing on proportions and major shapes, you'll quickly find out how much the thumbnail stage benefits the amount of ideas you can generate in a short amount of time.

> Creature ideation allows you to just go wild and have fun, whether they are realistic in nature or whimsical and stylised

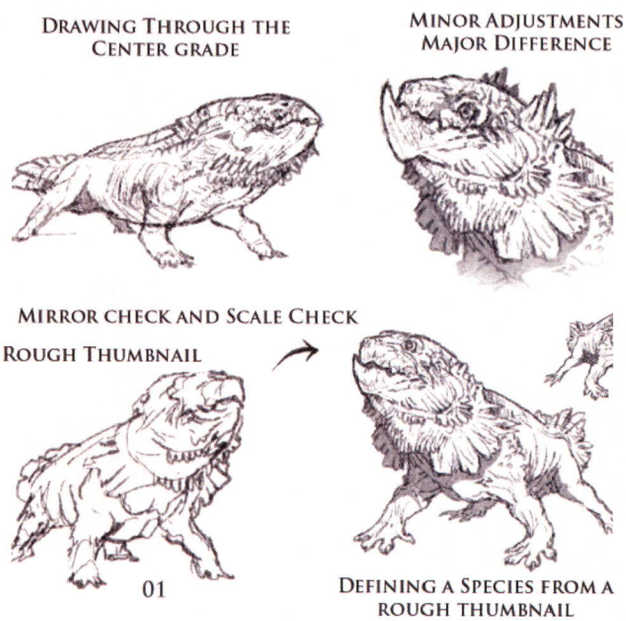
2 Revising elements

We're going to take some of the more interesting ideas and follow up on refining some of the details. It's still in the rough stage, but what this allows us to do is to take what we think we see in the rough thumbnail and push it in a few different directions. The majority of the dominant shapes are there, as well as the pose and outline, but the characteristics and other features are what will really define the creature.



3 Minor adjustments with major differences

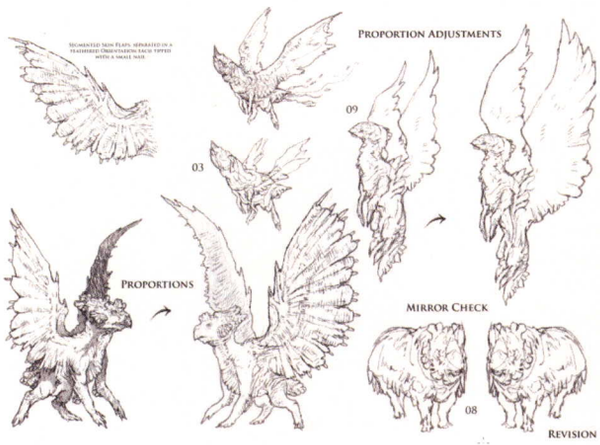
By taking one digital thumbnail and putting it on a low opacity, you can produce a number of variations of one creature simply by positioning the eye in a different spot or exaggerating the size of the lower jaw, even stretching that rough thumbnail and then repositioning the limbs and lengthening the body. Little adjustments like that will produce a major difference in the final outcome.



Tutorial

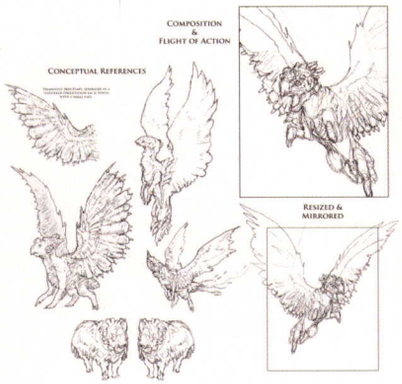
4 Proportions

The proportions of the design balance out the distribution of weight as well as the flow of the anatomy. You'll notice here that one thumbnail is flipped, which is another important step you should do early on before getting into too much detail. Mirroring an image helps you see any skewed flaws more easily. It also helps you see any flaws in perspective. The major changes being made deal with the scale of the wings on the creatures of flight.



5 Conceptual references

We've compiled all of the thumbnails that have been revised or interest us the most, and we utilised them to produce a quick rough sketch as a layout for the composition to the final painting. Having these thumbnails that were designed beforehand will make it much easier to reproduce the creature in a different pose. In this case, we went with a dragon-based design but with a few twists.

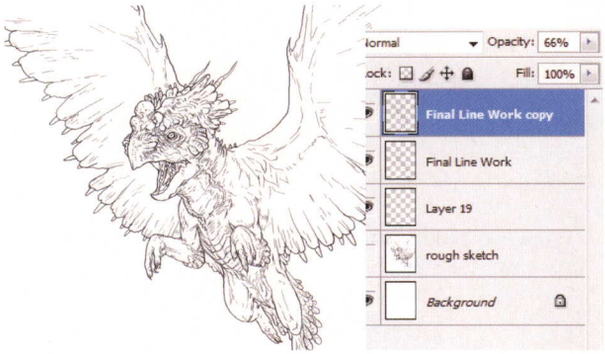


6 Polish the sketch

After playing around with the scale and position of the creature in flight, we began to overlay a more detailed sketch on top of the rough layout. The rough sketch was set to a low opacity so that we could keep the scale, the pose and the position of things on target, but this way we could focus on detailing the actual design and stay true to the previous concepts and references.

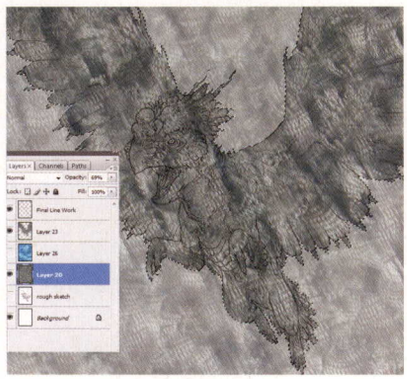
7 Clean lines

The line drawing is now complete. We used a custom brush but a clean one that is different than the brush used to rough out the thumbnails earlier. In preparation for the final painting and some of the short cuts we would be taking, the clean line work set on its own layer will come in handy later on. One of the changes that we made during this redrawing stage was shrinking the hind legs and lower body to force the perspective.



8 Photo texture base

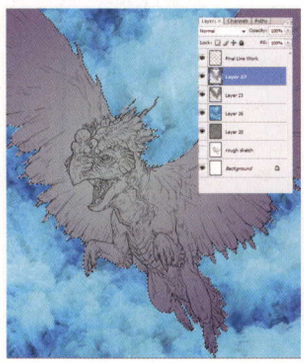
You can find a lot of great high-res textures at http://mayang.com/textures/. The texture we used here is actually a piece of cloth but we just repeatedly painted out a lot of the darker spots using the Clone Stamp. Positioning the texture over the line work and then selecting the negative space and inverting it lets us quickly provide a base photo texture for the dragon creature. This will serve as a scaled surface.



> "Custom brushes will help make your painting unique, while they'll help produce a more traditional look and speed up the workflow"

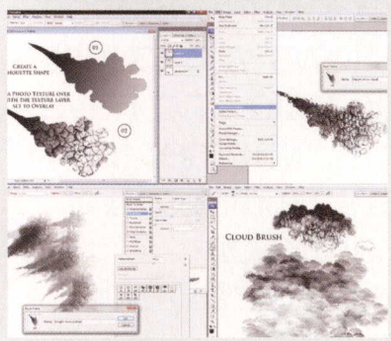
9 Base colours

With the texture on its own layer, we filled the inverted selection of the line work with the colour scheme. The background was created using another photo, which was of abstract food with a quick Motion Blur applied, a blue-tinted Photo Filter and a custom brush. The brush was created by Mathias Verhasselt and supplied as a free download.



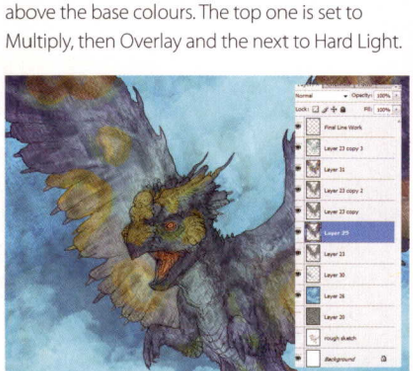
Custom brushes

Custom brushes will help make your painting unique, while they'll also help produce a more traditional look and help speed up the workflow. First, create a silhouette shape. This can be done with the Selection tool or by simply painting with a default brush. Next, break up the values of the silhouette by providing a photo texture on an overlay layer. Once you've done that, you can further break up the clean edges and then save the brush as a preset. Simply go to Edit>Define Brush Preset and name your brush. Now the brush will show up in your brush list. To apply settings to your custom brush, just fool around with the Spacing, Brush Shape, Opacity, Flow and Angle Jitter, as well as the Scatter and Size Dynamics. Once you're happy with the outcome, just right-click the canvas and click the little page icon to create a new brush preset and then rename your brush. Now your custom brush is saved with all the brush settings you have applied to it.



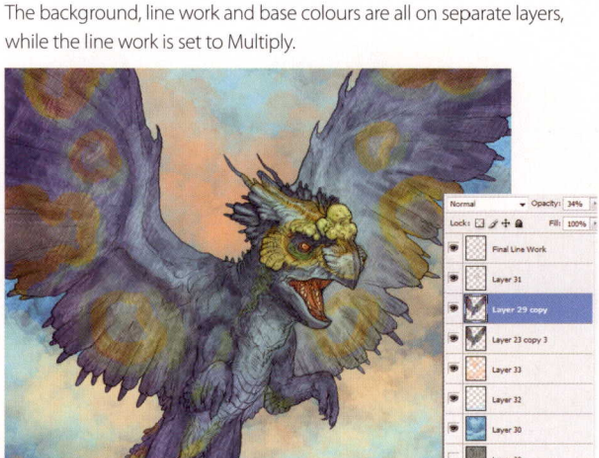
10 Multilayered texture

After breaking up the creature with some simple highlights, shadows and basic colours, we duplicated that photo texture silhouette a few times. we set up a hot key as Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+J for reproducing a selection and creating new layers quickly. To get the most out of the texture, position three duplications above the base colours. The top one is set to Multiply, then Overlay and the next to Hard Light.



11 Separate the creature from the background

After flattening the effects layers, we built up the values and colour of the creature to break up the structure and focal points. The image was flipped to check for flaws and the background hit up with a contrasting colour to that of the blue in the sky and creature's colours. The background, line work and base colours are all on separate layers, while the line work is set to Multiply.

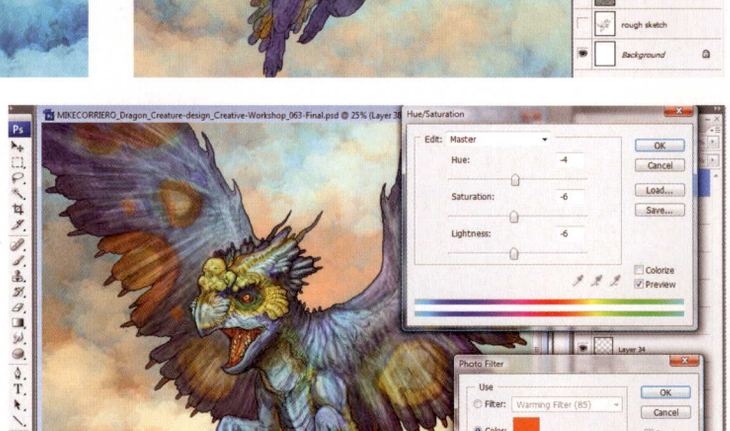


12 Highlights and shadows

Still in keeping with the line work on Multiply and painting beneath the sketch, we built up the shadows and the highlights of the creature. We also adjusted the levels and saturation of the background and continued to apply more pinks and brighter colours to help in contrast with the creature.

13 Colour, saturation and value adjustments

It's time to flatten the image. Starting from this point on, the base texture and colours of the image are complete. A quick Hue, Saturation and Lightness adjustment is made on a duplicated layer of the creature. On an additional duplicated layer, a Photo Filter colour adjustment is added to help tie in the tones of the creature to that of the background sky. Each of the layers are erased out in various areas so that some of the true colour we started with still shines through.

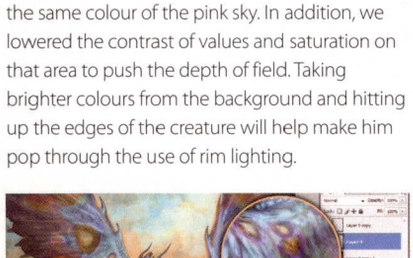


14 Refining and defining

This is just the tedious polishing and defining what basically already exists. The colours and values are close to what we want so that will serve as a guide to rendering out the finer details. Brighter colours and a stronger contrast in values of light and dark colours will help define key elements in the design.

15 Depth, light and patterns

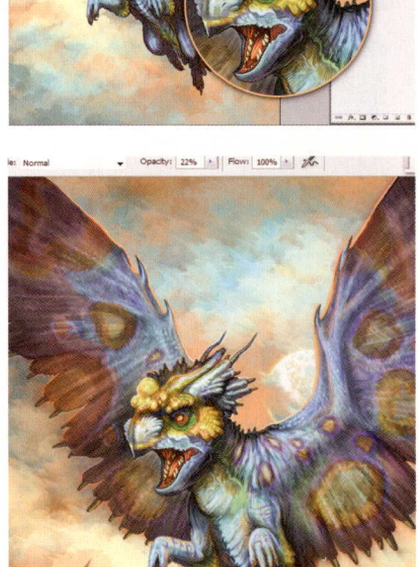
We selected the lower back of the creature, duplicated the area and then ran a Photo Filter effect over the area to fade subtly into the same colour of the pink sky. In addition, we lowered the contrast of values and saturation on that area to push the depth of field. Taking brighter colours from the background and hitting up the edges of the creature will help make him pop through the use of rim lighting.



> Taking brighter colours from the background and hitting up the edges of the creature will help make him pop through the use of rim lighting

16 Motion, elements and final touches

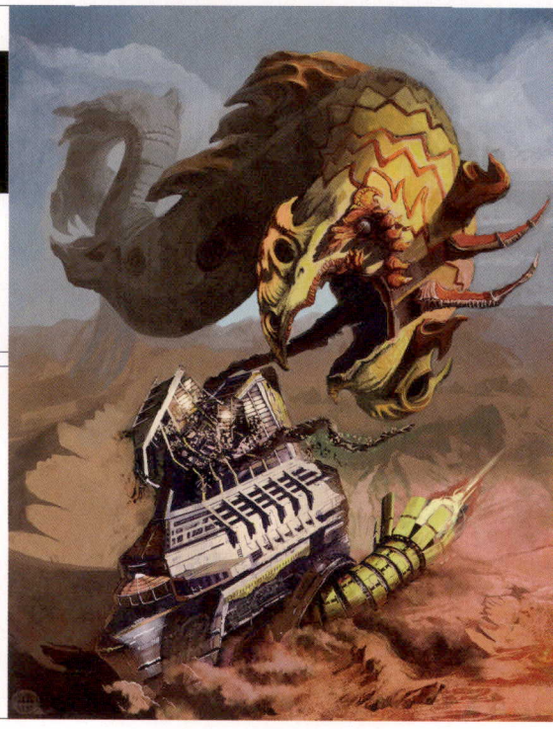
We added in some more features, like the spikes of the chest and patterns on the arms, and brightened the saturation of a few extra spots. Other elements, such as the moon/planet and falling feathers, help balance the negative space in the background between the creature. Providing some Motion Blur effects helps in both the action taking place as well as bringing focus to the head of the creature. One of the last things done to help provide movement was the addition of strokes to the clouds using the Smudge tool. A quick check and it's finished.

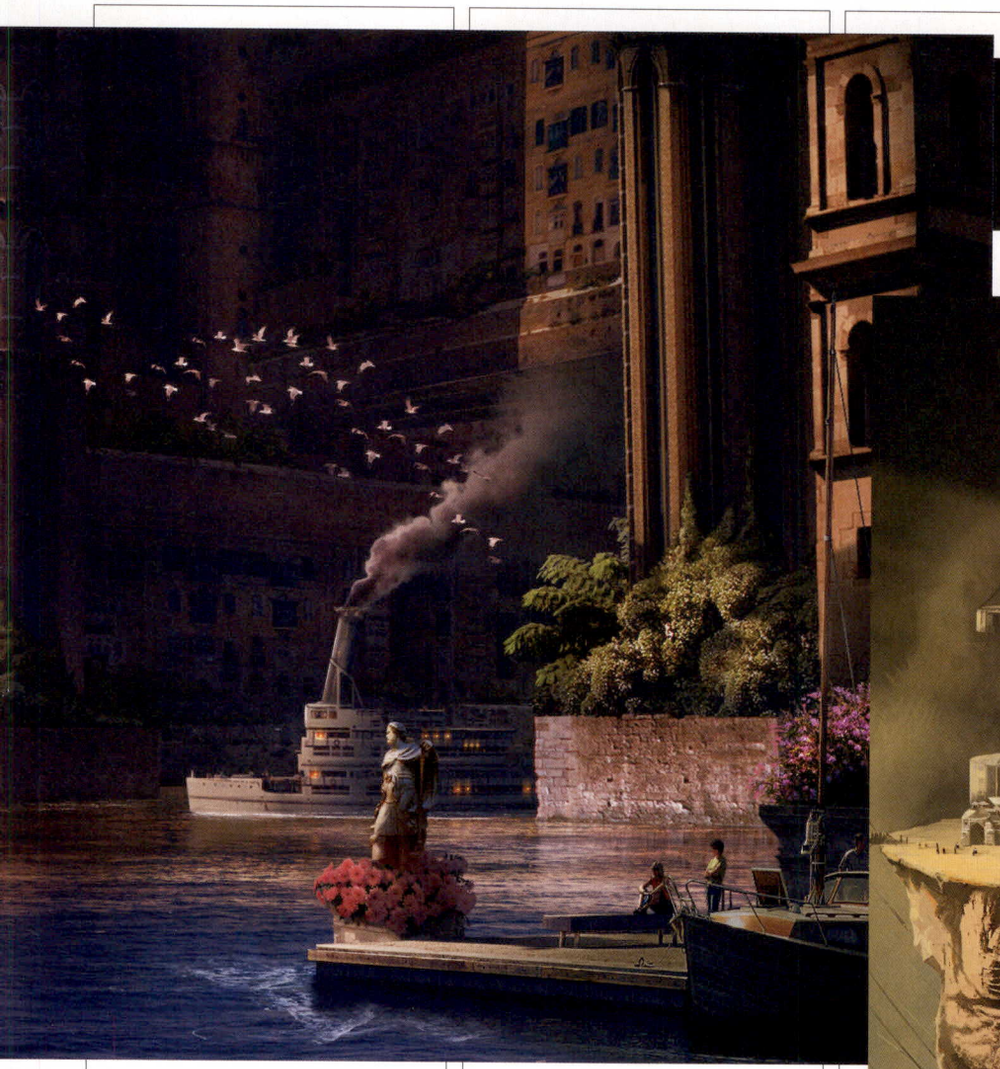


Insight

ROBOTIC EAGLE: *"This is an example of painterly strokes that was completed in Photoshop with custom brushes. Again, it's for* Sina and the Eagle of Doom*"*

SAND DRAGON: *"This is an illustration from our fantasy novel,* Sina and the Eagle of Doom. *It was fully completed in Photoshop with an old school painterly style"*





VENETIAN DREAM: *"This is an example of a matte painting that was fully completed in Photoshop (ie, without the use of any 3D software). It could be used as a movie background or as a guide for 3D artists"*

REY CITY: *"This conceptual environment design has been done with a lot of layers in Photoshop. The lights and shadows have been manipulated in order to create a realistic lighting scenario"*

Boali Dashtestani

Website: www.bdbros.com
Clients: BioWare Corp, Electronic Arts

Boali Dashtestani is a Canadian illustrator, concept artist, matte painter and 3D artist who has worked for some of the biggest titles in the videogame industry, including *Mass Effect* and *Dragon Age*. Having started as a professional artist at just 18 years old, Dashtestani learnt how to transfer his traditional skills to Photoshop and Painter. He then started his own studio for freelance work: "Through my studio, my talented brother (Behrang, who's a writer) and I also create fantasy illustrated novels. Our first collaborative creation is called *Sina and the Eagle of Doom*, which was recently featured on a Canadian breakfast television programme."

All this is a far cry from his humble roots as a caricature artist at the Toronto Exhibition's Water Park, where he became the youngest artist to work there at the age of 18. His move into the videogame industry was self-initiated: "I created a portfolio consisting of my drawings and concepts along with some 3D art pieces. My first big gig was BioWare Corp's *Mass Effect* for the Xbox 360."

Photoshop is a key part of the process in creating Dashtestani's artwork. He explains: "I mostly use the program for photoreal matte paintings. Photoshop is also a very solid tool for creating concepts and illustrations. For example, I can create a realistic matte painting or an old school painterly illustration with a lot of textures and custom brushes. The possibilities are limitless in Photoshop."

MASTER DIGITAL PAINTING

Paint delicate characters and lively nature using custom brushes and blending modes

We will go through the process of painting a realistic figure and a lively background. In order to do this, we need to find a topic, choose a colour palette and decide which brushes we will use in various ways to create subtle tones and textures, layer by layer building the character, foliage and little detail. Photoshop will be our only program for its blending modes, library of custom brushes and some useful filters that will create subtle effects.

To find a theme, you can use paintings, photos, poems, books, myths and anything that you can to inspire you. It is important to have such a collection; every time you look through your treasures, you can find something new. In this case, it was a snowy day with the sun shining through leafless branches.

William Bouguereau's paintings were an inspiration here for their subtle, porcelain skin tones, realistic nature and ancient myths contained within them.

Our expert

Olga Dąbrowska
http://nakatoni.com/

Olga is a freelance digital painter and illustrator. She has been published in various CG magazines and books, and has worked for a software company in Poland for a long time. Her favourite themes are fantasy, characters and animals, created using Photoshop and Painter.

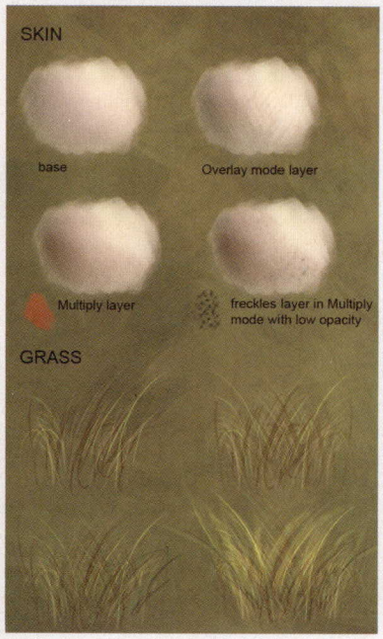
Source files

The files needed for the tutorial can be found on the CD, where you will find custom textures, brushes, a cloth pattern and a painted flower.

Using layers

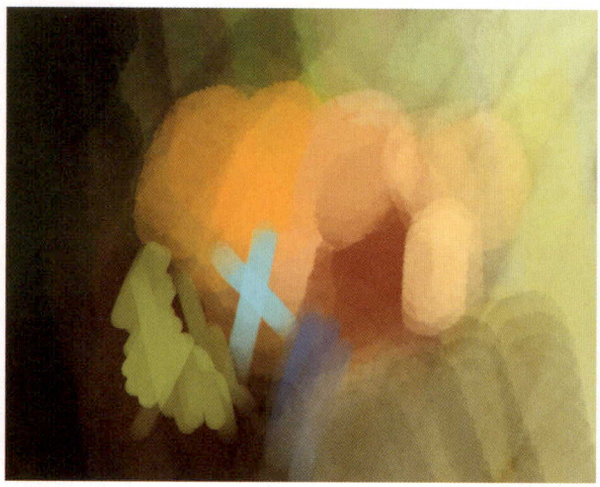
Over 50 layers were used here, with a new layer for each single detail, including freckles, skin texture, hair, birds, butterflies and especially foliage. Photoshop offers various blending modes that can enhance your work if you use them wisely. It is important to create subtle tones and textures by lowering the Opacity value on layers.

For the grass, paint basic blades with a hard round brush, and then copy the layer, flip horizontally and lower the Opacity value again. Repeat this with various colours and, when this is done, add a new layer of a light colour set to the Overlay blending mode. When you're satisfied, always merge layers so that your file does not grow to a ridiculous size.



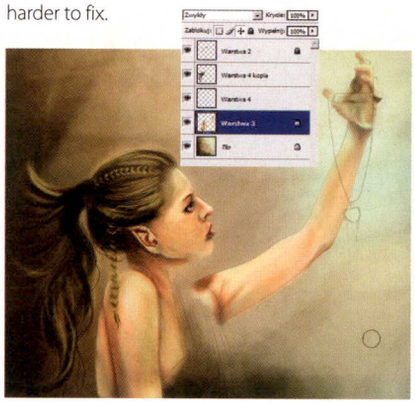
1 Choose your colour palette

Start with a rough colour palette where you can see how the colours are working together and if the mood is exactly what you want. In this instance we wanted to create a bright image, so we took warm oranges, yellows and reds with some green and brown tones. In order to contrast them, we added blue and turquoise as well.



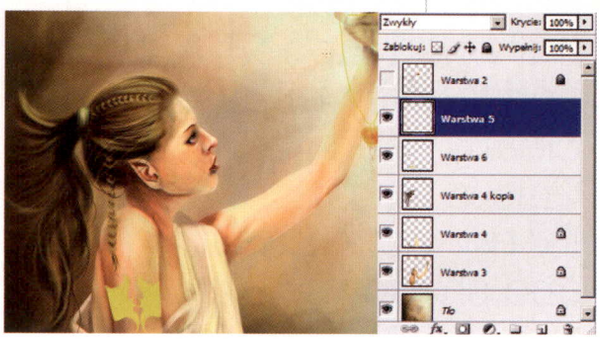
2 Basic colouring

On a new layer beneath the sketch, lay down base colours with a hard round brush and Opacity set to Pen Pressure. Roughly mark shadows and lights, and at this point also pick background colours to blend the figure from the very beginning. We will try to be as accurate as possible with shading, as later on it will be harder to fix.



3 Build layers

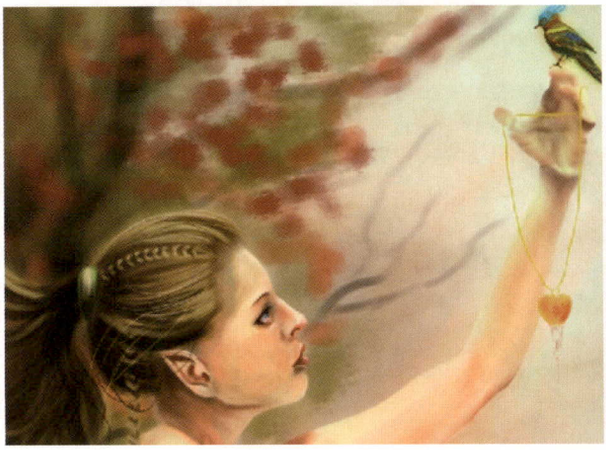
We can take advantage of Photoshop's layers and make a new one for every new shading layer, setting it to Multiply for light colours and Overlay for cold colours. This way, we can get an instant vision if the shading is right. When satisfied, merge the skin layers. Also sketch details now, such as the pendant and bracelet.



> Use paintings, photos, poems, books, myths and anything that you can to inspire. It is important to have such a collection; every time you look through your treasures, you find something new

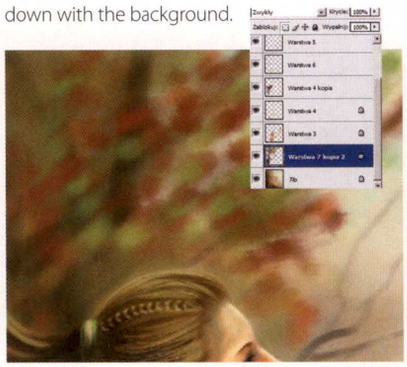
4 First hint of foliage

At this point we need to decide on our background. On a new layer, sketch some berries and branches to see how they will look. Try to be as loose as possible here, because those plants will not be very visible and there's no need to render them in every detail.



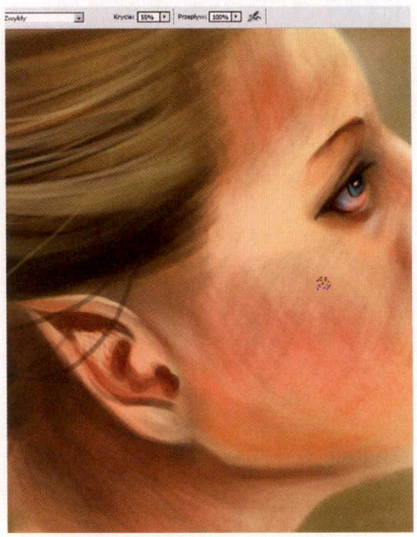
5 Blur it!

When you're satisfied with the berries, add more leaves with a saturated green colour. Add an immediate illusion of distance for the foliage using a Gaussian Blur with the Radius set to 10-20px. Copy the layer and use Motion Blur with the Distance at approximately 60px. Lower the Opacity value of the layer copy and merge them down with the background.



6 Shading skin

We prefer a more realistic look for the skin and we achieve this by using a Spatter brush with low Pressure, gently scribbling over the skin. Use strange colours like cool violet, cool green, mauve, orange, turquoise and deep blue, as well as basic skin tones to achieve subtle tones and texture. With this technique, make all the corrections of shapes that's needed.

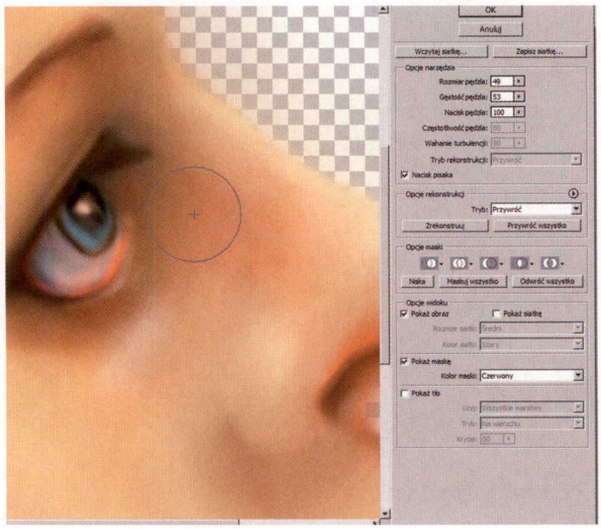


7 Body shading

For the rest of the body we use the same technique, this time paying more attention to lighter areas. Use warm yellow and turquoise on them. To blend colours, we use a textured brush with the Smudge tool, Strength set to 2-5%, applying gentle pressure to preserve the delicate mixture of colours we just created.

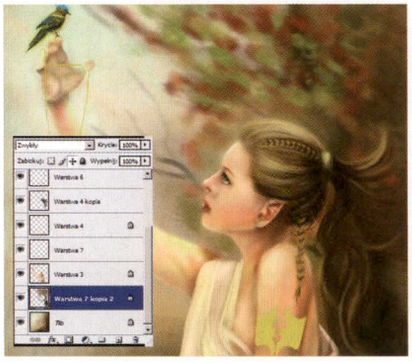
8 Corrections

Using the Liquify option found under the Filter menu, correct the shape and position of the eye. Use a low Pen Pressure, but set Tool Pressure to 100. The Liquify tool is very useful when there is a need to change shape or position, but it is not recommended for big corrections. These should be done by repainting the desired area.



9 Flip the image

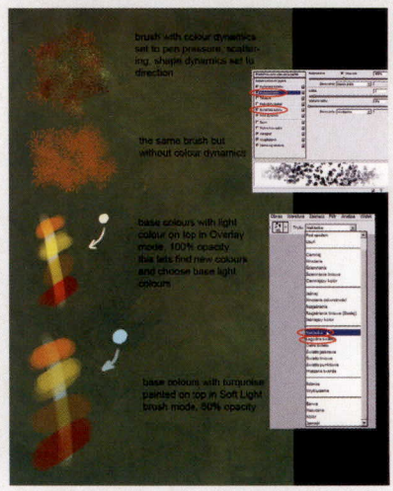
The eye gets used to the look of the image, so when flipped horizontally and vertically, mistakes are clearly seen in an image. Paint for some time in the flipped horizontally position. This is also recommended for correcting lights and shadows, as they will look better after turned back to the original position.



> The eye gets used to the look of the image, but when flipped horizontally, mistakes are clearly seen in an image. This is also recommended for correcting lights and shadows

Brush settings

Brush blending modes can work for you. Images painted only with a brush set to Normal can, of course, be interesting too, but using blending modes makes all the difference. In the Brushes palette you will find many settings – play with them to see if they can help you. In the top bar in the Photoshop window, there is a palette with all the blending modes available. We use mainly Overlay, Soft Light, Multiply and Linear Dodge in our paintings, especially for finishing touches where only subtle changes are required. Suffice to say, all of the blending modes can definitely work in your advantage.

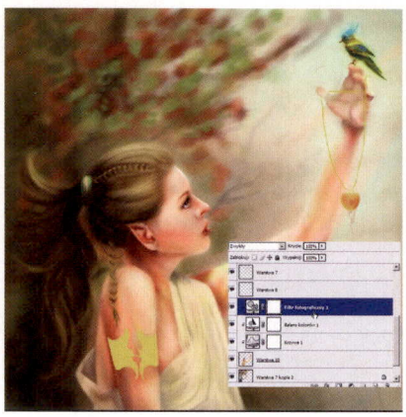


10 Paint the bird

The bird is not the main focus and it will not be rendered to its maximum detail. For the feathers, use a Spatter brush with 0% Spacing, then smudge gently with the same brush and add a new layer in Linear Dodge for highlights. Copy the bird layer to achieve a subtle blur, use Motion Blur with a high Distance and lower the Opacity of the layer to 5-10%.

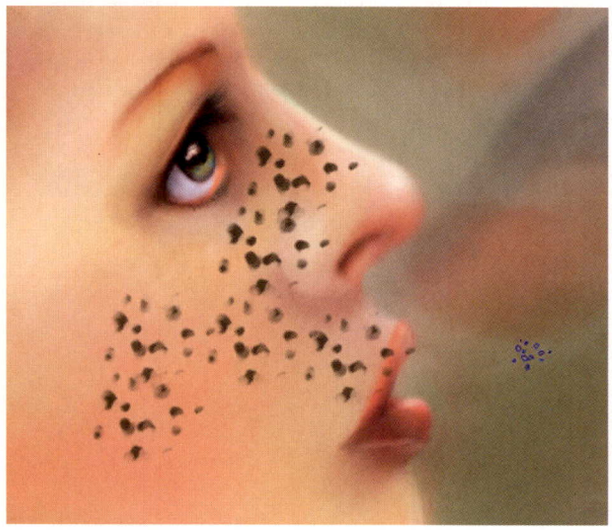
11 Colour adjustments

Use adjustment layers, as they can be set to a low Opacity value and create subtle changes. They also can be set to various blending modes, which leads to even more possibilities. The skin layer is adjusted with the following adjustment layers: Curves, Color Balance and Photo Filter, each at a low Opacity value and Normal mode. Afterwards, the skin colour matches better with the background.



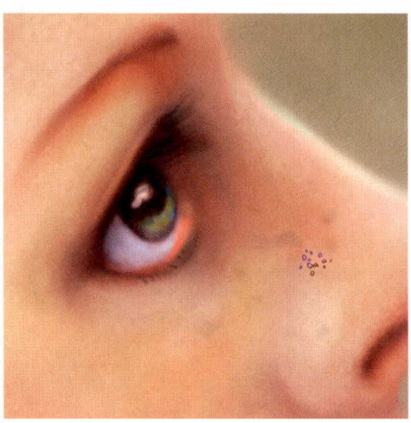
12 Freckles

Human skin has many variations, imperfections and textures, so let's add some freckles to make it more realistic. Use a Spatter brush with Spacing set to 80% and Scattering set to 400% on a new layer in Multiply mode, using a colour of medium brown. Erase some of the freckles and lower the Opacity value of the layer to 8-12%.



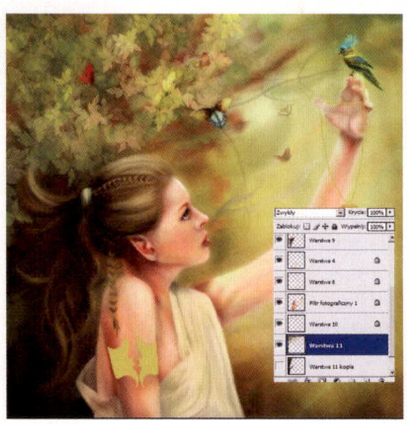
13 More skin texture

To add even more realism, create a new layer and, with the skin pores brush from the disc, paint using a light peach colour. Set the layer mode to Overlay and lower the Opacity value. On another layer, paint with cool, dark green in the areas where shadows fall, for instance in the corner of the eye. Set the layer mode to Soft Light and lower the Opacity value until it looks barely visible.



14 Leaves

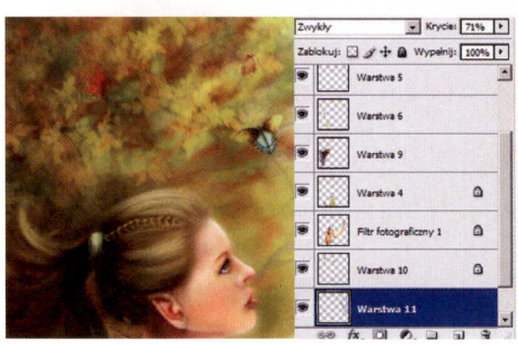
Painting them one by one would take too much time and the result would not look natural, so a custom leaf brush was created, which can be found on the CD. With this, paint leaves on new layer above the Background layer. Color Dynamics works in your advantage here – just don't forget to change the Foreground and Background colour of the brush (in the Tools palette).



> "Brush blending modes can work for you. Images painted only with a brush set to Normal can, of course, be interesting too, but using blending modes makes all the difference"

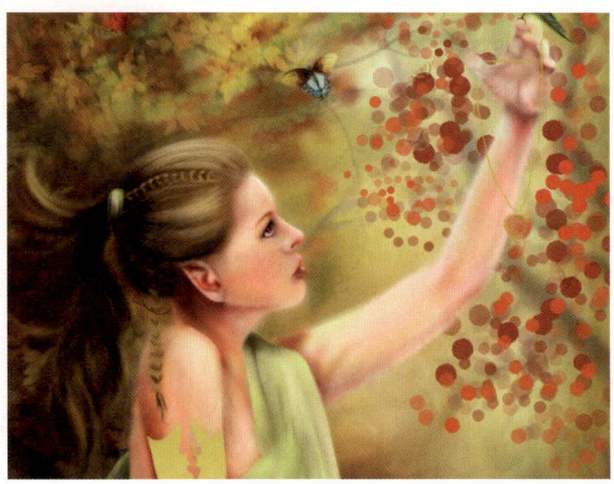
15 Balance

The leaves stand out too much, so set the blending mode to Overlay and lower the Opacity value a bit. The image is unbalanced, so paint distant trees on the right, blurring the layer with Gaussian Blur with a 15px Radius and some butterflies. The further the butterfly is from the viewer, the lower the opacity and the less saturated the colours should be.



16 Foliage, foliage and more foliage

On new layer, paint berries with a hard round brush and Spacing set to 150%, Scattering set to Pen Pressure, 700%. Colour is picked from the leaves layer. Apply Motion Blur. Layer by layer, finish the background using brushes from the disc. Merge the background layers, then add textures from the site in Soft Light set to a low Opacity value to really make the colours pop.



17 Flower chain and cloth pattern

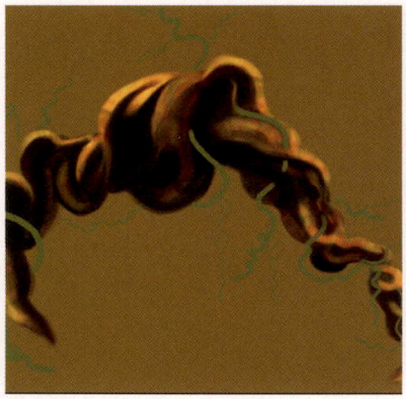
Paint the flower in a separate document or use the one from the CD. Copy it, scale, rotate, distort and change the colour with a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Repeat this several times, then paste them into your main file, transforming them to create a flower chain. Adjust the colours and paint in some butterflies. Paint a cloth pattern on a new layer set to the Overlay mode, gently erasing areas where shadows fall on the cloth.

Quick tip

Every now and then, create a new brush set and play with the brush settings. The sky is the limit in terms of the number of variations you are able to have, and this will enhance your paintings immediately. The brushes created for this painting, provided on the free cover disc, can be a good start to build your brush library.

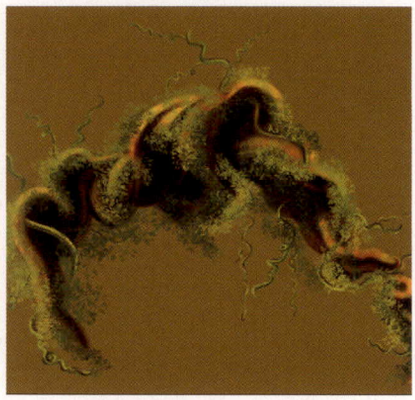
18 Paint a root

Painting a root is a whole new project, so do it either in your main document or, as we did, in a separate one. Start with the basic shapes and colours with a hard round brush. You can reference the root from a photo if you think it would help. Add single vines wrapping around the root. Smudge everything gently with a Spatter brush and Strength at 60%, in keeping with the root's direction.



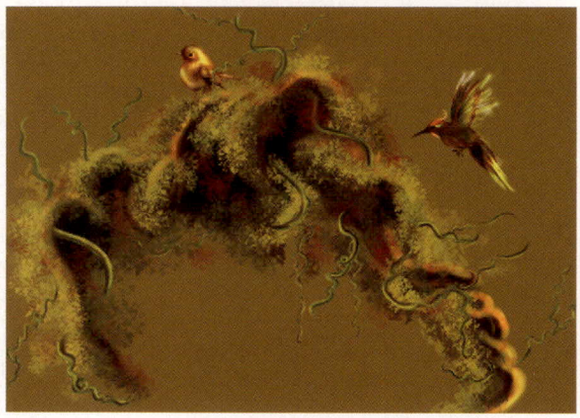
19 Continue with the root

Add texture with the texture brush on a new layer set to Overlay. Paint leaves using the leaf brush. Change colours, direction and the Opacity value to make it look realistic. Copy the leaves layer, lower the Opacity value to 30% and change the colour with Hue/Saturation. Paint shadows and highlights on vines. You can arrange documents via Window>Arrange so that you can pick colours from your main image.



20 More roots

Now it's time to add life to our root. Paint some butterflies, birds, a mouse, insects, loose twigs as well as moss and blades of grass – nature should inspire you. The root is a small world in itself and there is life, too. We painted a bird feeding its chick to accentuate the general idea of the painting (life, a new beginning), the message brought by the bird.



21 Incorporate the root into the main image

When the root is finished, merge layers then copy and paste to your main document above the Background layer. Now you can apply transformations and colour adjustments as needed. As the root is positioned partly behind the character, erase this part with a soft-edged brush and low Opacity value. Add more leaves where needed to blend the root into the background.

22 Finish up

Merge all the layers and use adjustment layers to enhance contrast, change saturation and colours too if these are needed. Adjustment layers are better than direct layer adjusting, because you can always delete them if they don't work. Creating a layer filled with white and set to Color will show you if the lights and shadows are distinct enough.

> Every now and then, create a new brush set and play with the brush settings. The sky is the limit in terms of the number of variations you are able to have, and this will enhance your paintings immediately

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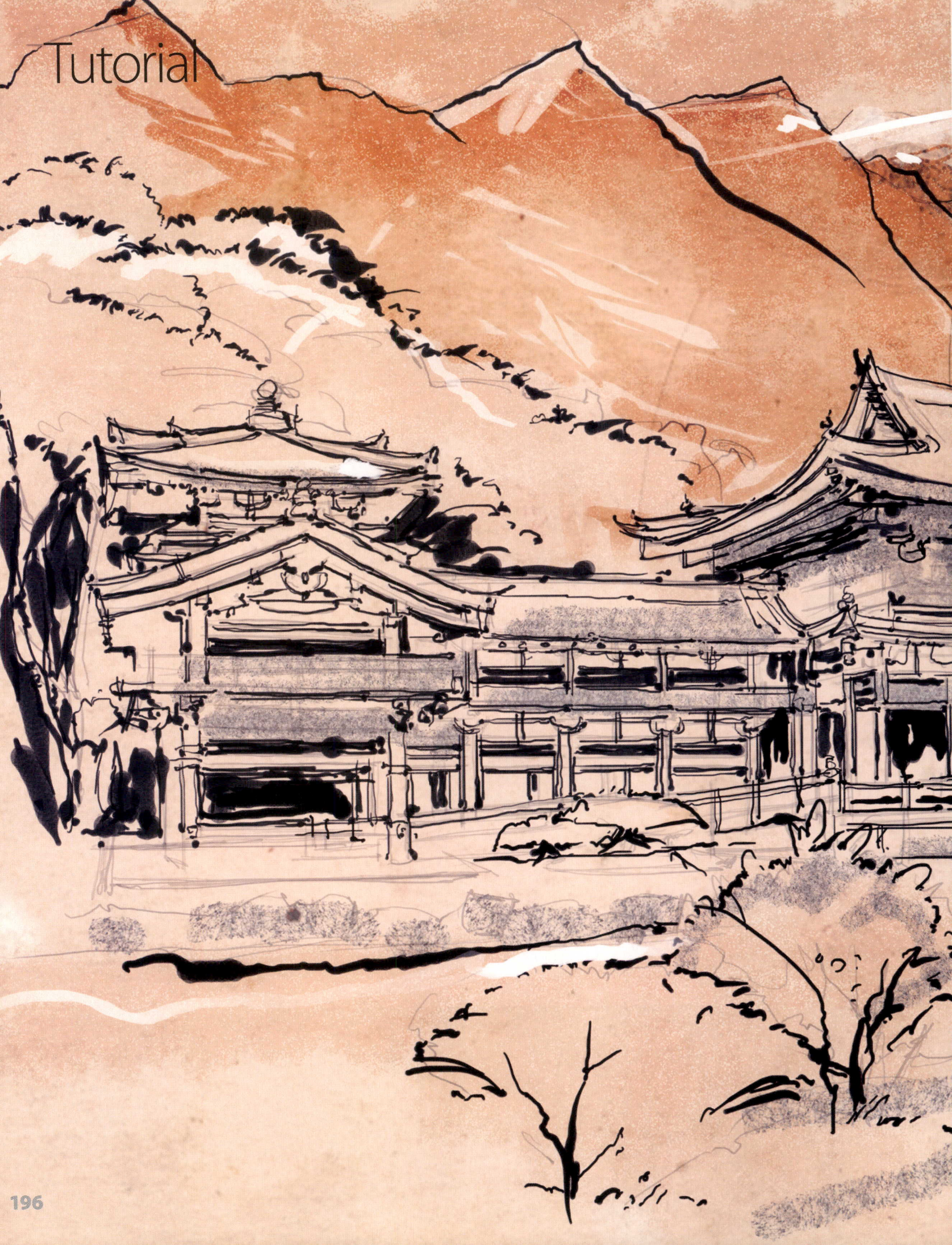
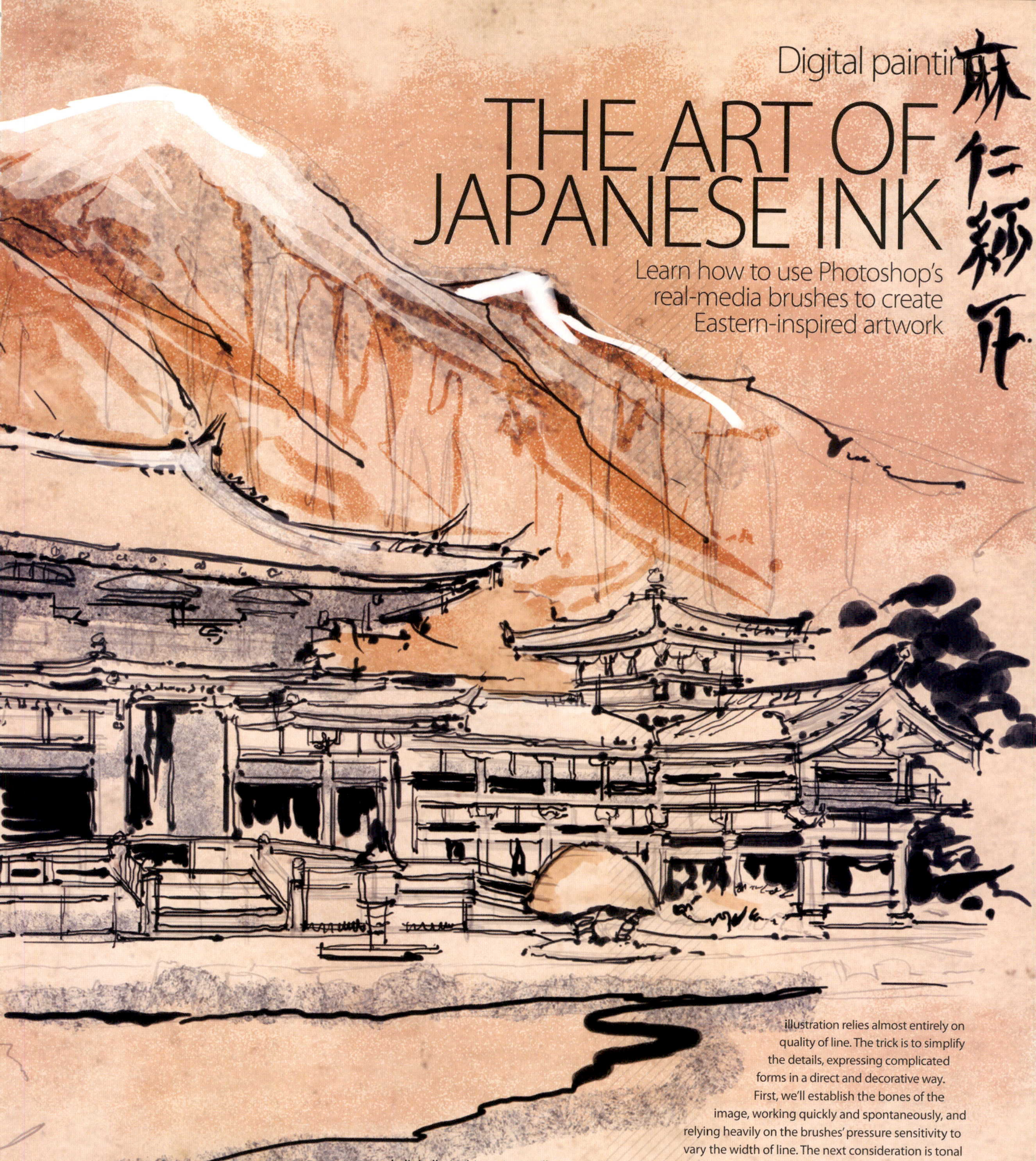


Digital painting

THE ART OF JAPANESE INK

Learn how to use Photoshop's real-media brushes to create Eastern-inspired artwork



Japanese art has relied on the directness of ink, pen and brush for centuries, and making marks with ink on paper remains one of the most powerful and direct ways of drawing, even when you work digitally. In this project we'll re-create this timeless Japanese artistic tradition in Photoshop, which has specialist brushes that will suit our needs perfectly.

However, when it comes to drawing with ink, the pen or brush you use is only half the story. What matters most is the way you draw with the tools. This form of illustration relies almost entirely on quality of line. The trick is to simplify the details, expressing complicated forms in a direct and decorative way.

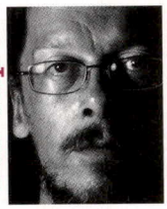
First, we'll establish the bones of the image, working quickly and spontaneously, and relying heavily on the brushes' pressure sensitivity to vary the width of line. The next consideration is tonal balance – we'll quickly establish any deep shadows with expressive strokes of pure black.

For a degree of shading, we'll use a couple of other brushes to add a few loose washes of tone to establish some subtle midtones.

Turning Japanese? We really think so!

Tutorial

Our expert



Tim Shelbourne
www.tjshelbourne.co.uk

Trained as a traditional artist, Tim Shelbourne made the switch to digital many years ago and now specialises in both Photoshop and Painter. Tim is also a regular contributor to **Photoshop Creative**.

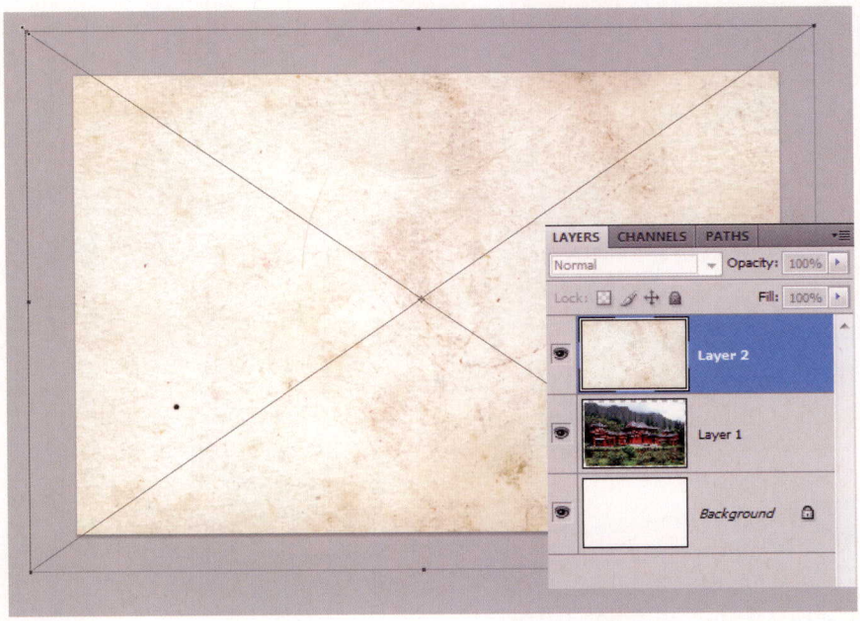
Source files

There is a paper scan image on the disc. You will also need a photo reference. Ours is from iStockphoto.com, image number '4335552'.

> There's no need for you to go into too much detail at this stage – just create a useful guiding sketch

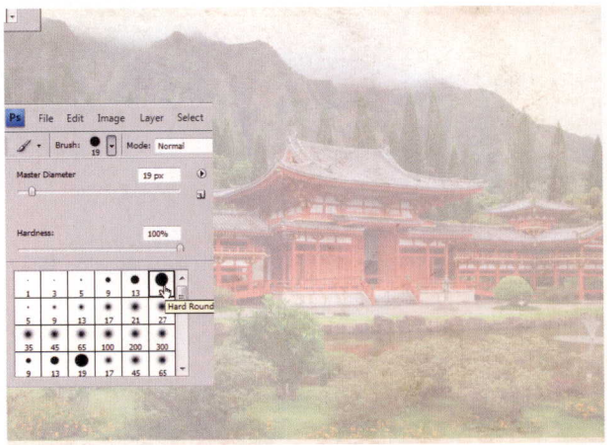
1 Perfect paper

Open your photo reference and duplicate the background layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J). Fill the original background layer with white via Edit>Fill. Now open the supplied paper scan ('paper.jpg') and copy and paste it into the main image. Ctrl/right-click the paper layer, choosing Convert To Smart Object. Now use Edit>Transform>Scale to scale the paper over the entire canvas area.



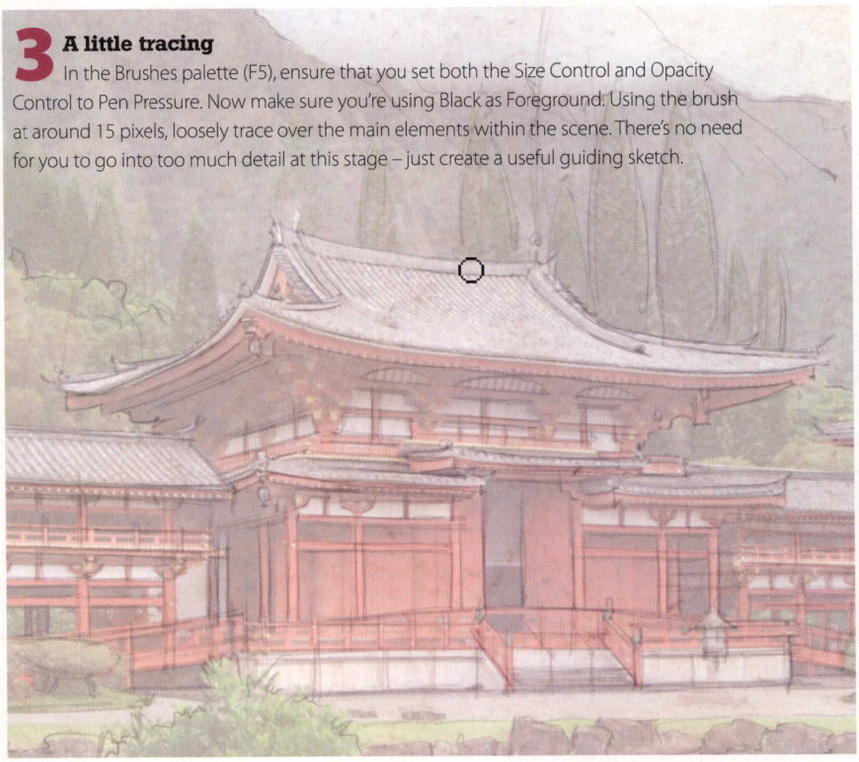
2 Photo reference

Drag this layer down the stack, dropping it between the filled background and the main image layer. Set the layer Opacity to around 50%. Click on the photo reference layer and reduce its Opacity to just 30% to serve as a tracing reference layer. Add a new layer, choose the Brush tool and choose a hard round brush.



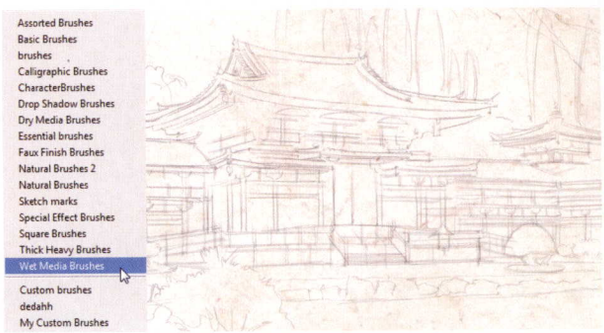
3 A little tracing

In the Brushes palette (F5), ensure that you set both the Size Control and Opacity Control to Pen Pressure. Now make sure you're using Black as Foreground. Using the brush at around 15 pixels, loosely trace over the main elements within the scene. There's no need for you to go into too much detail at this stage – just create a useful guiding sketch.



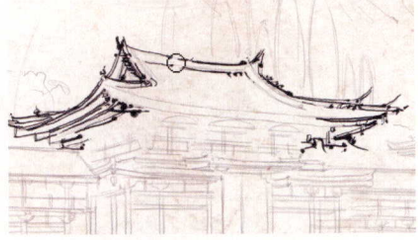
4 Wet Media brushes

Once your initial sketch is completed, hide the photo reference via its visibility eye. At this stage it's useful to have the original photograph open in another window, so you can refer to it as you develop the drawing. Add a new layer, and from the Brush Picker load the Wet Media brush set. Choose the Brush Light Texture Medium Tip brush.



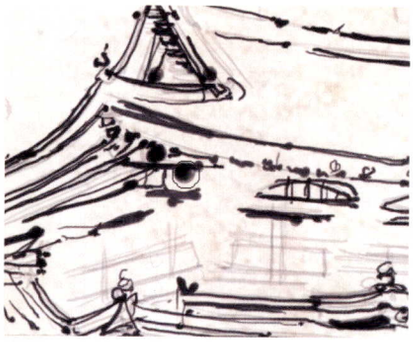
5 Start inking

In the Brushes palette (F5), ensure that both the Size and Opacity Controls are set to Pen Pressure. Using Black as Foreground use the brush at around 15 pixels to start inking the main outlines of the building. Line quality is very important here, and it's best if you draw swiftly for lots of energy and spontaneity within your line.



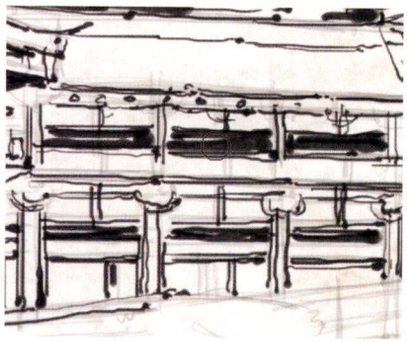
6 Super-sensitive!

This brush is wonderfully sensitive to the pressure you apply as you draw, so take advantage of this, varying your stylus pressure for a variety of thick and thin lines. By applying more pressure at the end of some strokes, you'll create an impression of ink from the brush leeching into the rice paper surface, for a convincing natural media feel.



7 On the dark side

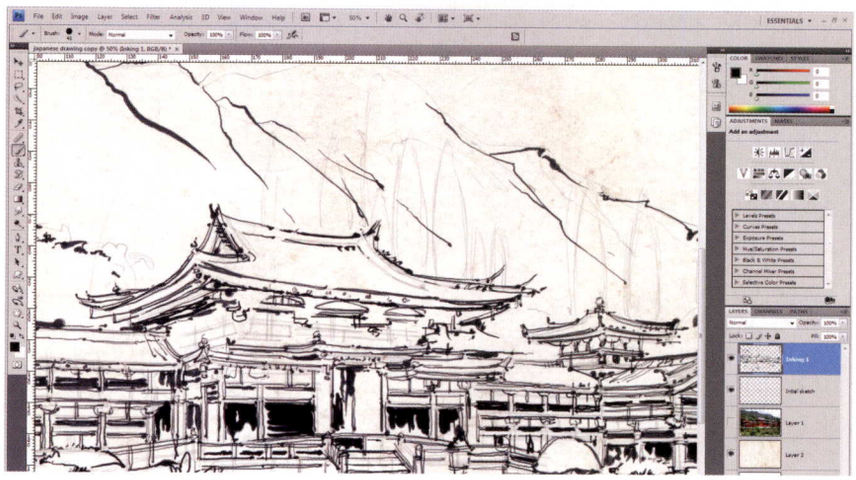
At this stage, concentrate on drawing the main outlines of the building and the various shapes within it. We'll add midtones later, but for the time being add any real darks by increasing the size of the brush a little and using lots of pressure for wide strokes. Make sure to keep your strokes quite spontaneous here.



> It's important that you simply indicate detail rather than outlining everything mechanically

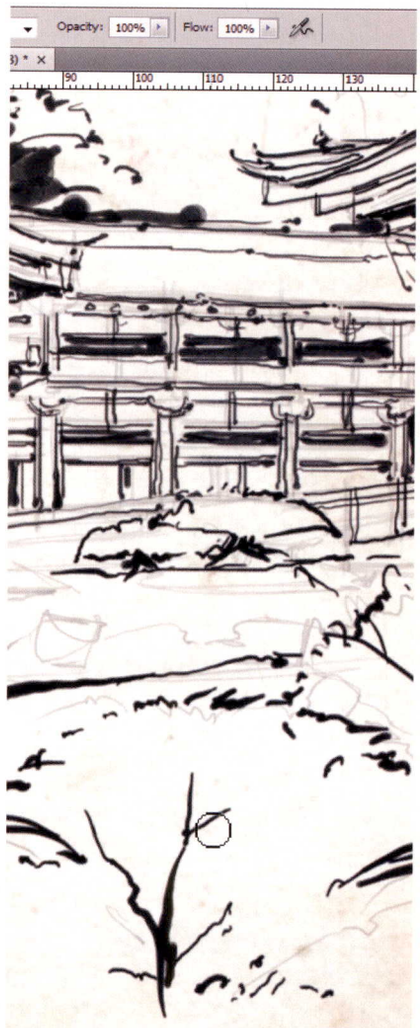
8 Indicated detail

Continue to build up the sketch of the building, simplifying detail by using fluid, energetic lines (see the 'Get to know your brushes' boxout on the next page for more hints on this). It's important that you simply indicate detail rather than outlining everything mechanically.



9 Root and branch

The trees need to be simplified and require special treatment to work well. First, increase the size of your brush and use very light pressure to indicate the main trunks and basic branches. Simple, fluid lines are the key here.

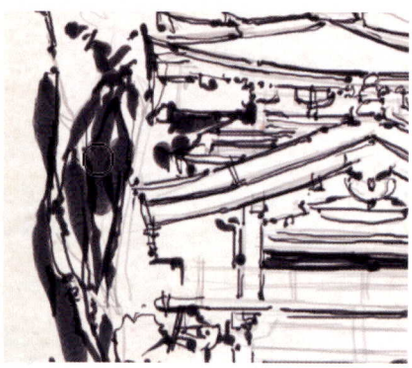


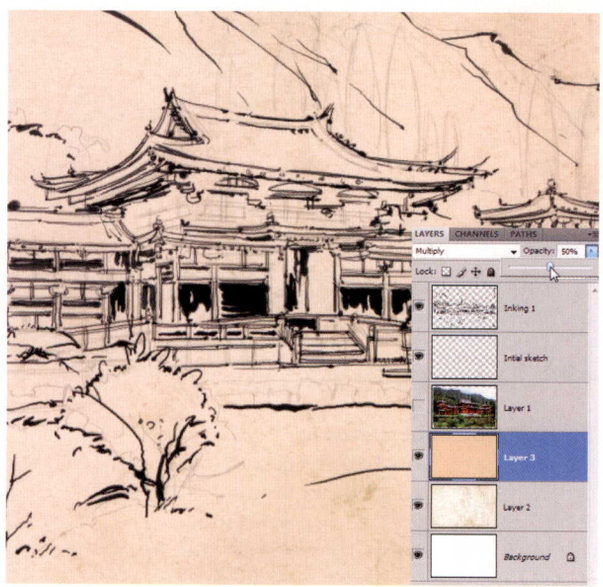
Quick tip

In complicated areas, for example the verandas in the building, try drawing the negative, dark shapes between the rails, rather than the rails themselves. This will not only make these areas easier to draw, but also make these areas more dynamic and descriptive.

10 Expressive strokes

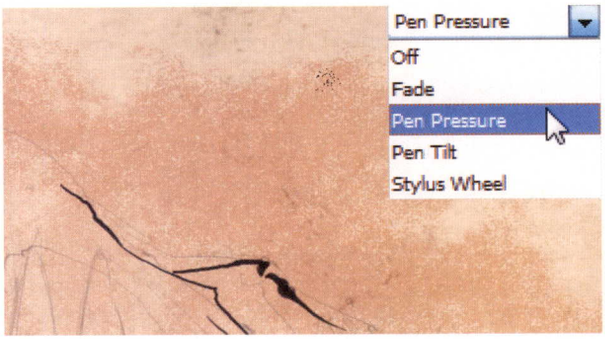
To indicate the dark areas within the trees and bushes, use lots of pressure on your stylus to create leaf-like strokes. Release your drawing pressure at the end of each stroke to finish with a sharp point. The outline of the main tree on the left needs a nice broken outline.





11 Overall colour

Click on the paper layer and add a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N). For the Foreground swatch choose the colour '#ebd0b3'. Go to Edit>Fill, choose Foreground Color for Contents. Set the blending mode for this layer to Multiply and reduce its Opacity to around 50%.

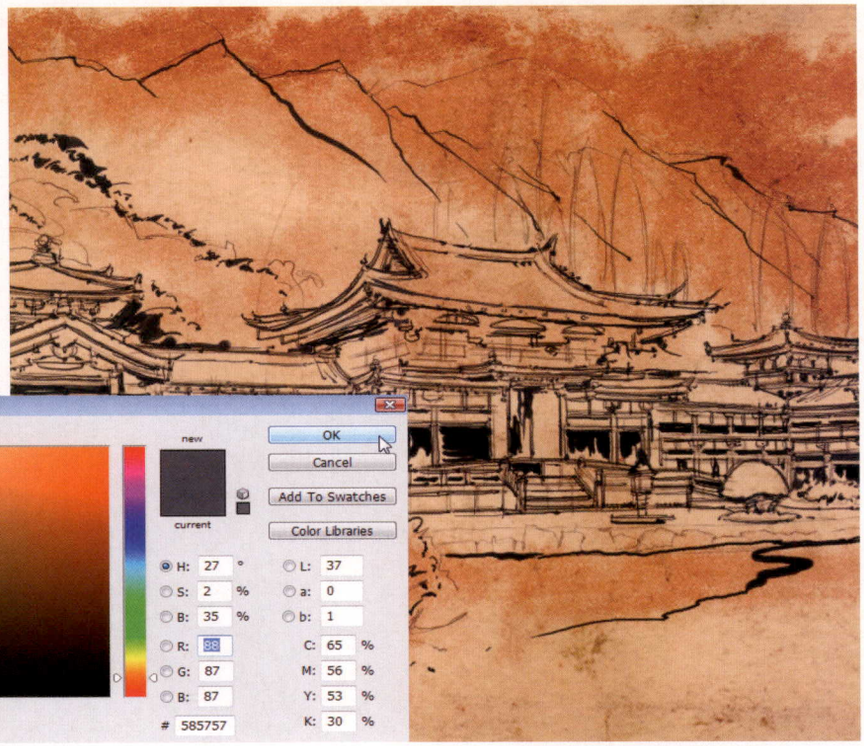


12 Clouding over

From the Wet Media brush set choose the Dry Brush On Towel brush. In the Brushes panel, ensure that Opacity Control is set to Pen Pressure and Size Control is set to Off. Choose the colour '#c37f43' for the foreground and quickly indicate a few subtle clouds using the brush at quite a large size.

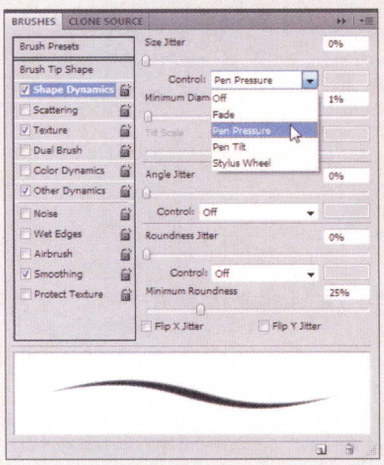
13 Added interest

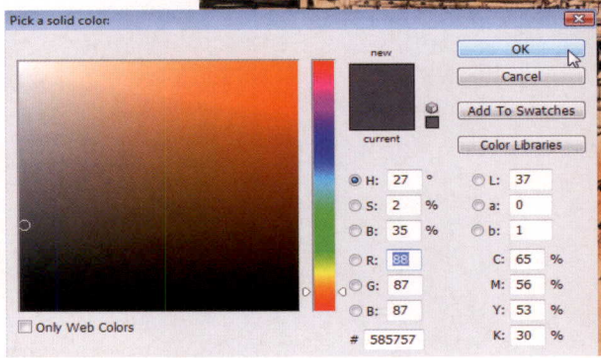
Next, using less pressure on your stylus, add some lighter strokes of this colour where the mountains will be positioned in the final painting, as well as a little over the foreground area. You will be able to adjust the intensity of this layer via the Opacity value in the Layers palette.



Get to know your brushes

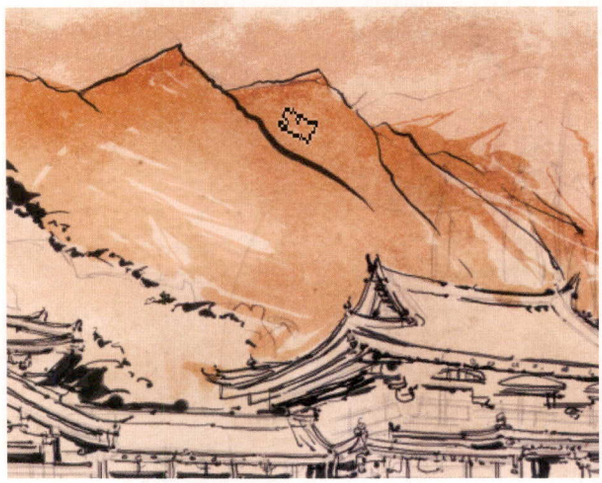
Before you begin a drawing such as this, it's a good idea to really get to know the qualities of the brush you're using. By taking a few minutes on a blank canvas to practise a few strokes, you'll not only save a lot of time, you'll also feel more confident when drawing for real. Remember, we're relying on pressure sensitivity here, and you can set this in the Shape Dynamics section of the Brushes palette (F5). You'll find an option for Pen Pressure in the Control options below the Size Jitter slider.





14 Solid Color layer

On the top layer in the stack, go to Layer>New Fill Layer>Solid Color. Choose the colour '#585757' for the fill. Set the blending mode for this layer to Color Burn and reduce its Opacity to 50%. Fill the mask on this layer with black via Edit>Fill. Now choose the Oil Medium To Large Tip brush.



15 Mountain midtones

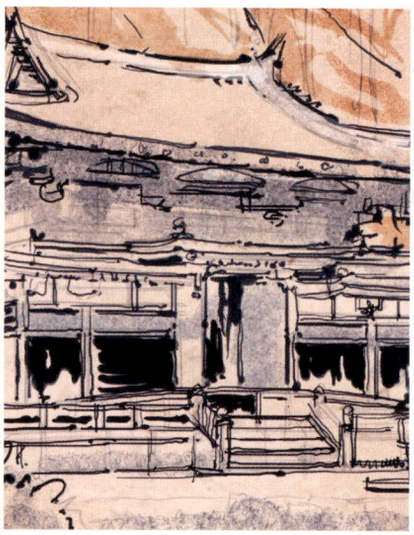
Use this brush with lots of pressure variation to add the darker brown tones to the mountains. Paint with long sinuous strokes, using the finished image as a reference. Apply very little pressure when doing the fine, vertical details. On a new layer, paint with white using similar strokes to add a little snow to the peaks.

16 Midtone interest

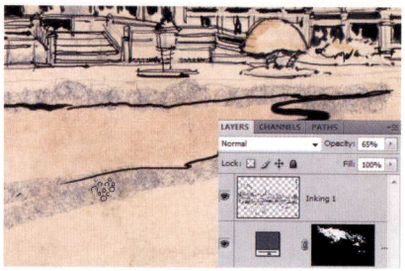
On another layer, choose the Large Texture Stroke brush. Ensure that the Size and Opacity controls are set to Pen Pressure in the Brushes palette. Choose the colour '#2d2d2d'. Use this brush at around 80 pixels and with light pressure to start brushing in some areas of midtone in the building.

17 **Keep it simple**

Remember, we're not actually copying the original photograph here, but adding some quite random areas of midtone. Leave the roofs of the building clear of shading, as this will separate the building from the background.



> At this stage, review your drawing from a distance and use the inking brush we used earlier to add final touches of detail. Keep things nice and simple for an authentic appearance



18 **Less is more**

Vary your brush size as you go to add smaller areas of midtone here and there. For the foreground, a couple of broad, simple strokes will suffice for the midtones to keep this area nice and clean. Remember, you can always reduce the Opacity of this layer for a more subtle effect.

19 **Review and refine**

At this stage, review your drawing from a distance and use the inking brush we used earlier to add any final touches of detail. It's important here that you don't add too much detail but keep things nice and simple for an authentic appearance.

Pressure brushes

Because of the pressure sensitivity of the brushes chosen for this Photoshop project, by varying the pressure on your stylus you can create spontaneous strokes that go from thick to thin

Using the mask

By brushing into the mask attached to a simple Solid Color layer we can create effective areas of constant midtone, which serves to separate the main subject from the more distant areas in the scene

Simple strokes

The key here is to simplify the subject, distilling detail into just a few basic strokes. This is definitely one of those drawing projects where 'less is more'!

Midtones

Once the main drawing is completed, areas of subtle wash-like midtones are created by using another Photoshop brush from the Wet Media brush library

MODERN MANGA IMAGES

Manga is the Japanese term for free, expressive artwork and this is what we will be looking to re-create in this workshop

Our expert

Olga Dabrowska
http://nakatoni.com

Olga is an illustrator, digital painter and freelancer, working for various clients in Poland and the UK. She's currently turning to children's illustration.

Source files

Sketch in JPEG format, the background and the colour palette are included on the CD.

Manga images are usually bright and rich in colours, and tend to feature interesting characters. We will use a pink and blue scheme to make the image vibrant, but we will avoid big, sparkling eyes to make the figure more realistic.

Using just two or three basic brushes throughout the process, we will create a vivid image of a 'wind warrior'. Photoshop's blending modes will help us make the image pop and shine. Useful shortcuts like copying and pasting elements and then transforming them will also speed up the workflow, as will using the infamous Dodge and Burn tools. In fact, this tutorial's all about using the basic tools that Photoshop has to offer to their best effect.

There's no need to use fancy brushes here. Manga is a simple style that looks to draw expressive images so we'll narrow our selection to the basic hard round brushes and airbrushes, and occasionally use the Spatter brush. A graphics tablet with pressure sensitivity is a must for this workshop. We will also need some patterns for the dress, taken from any site offering stock images; it's best to use vector imagery for its sharp, clear edges and easy scaling.

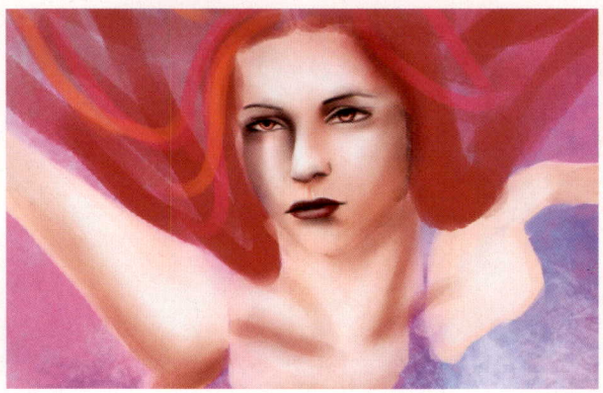
Visible brushstrokes

When the image is big enough, it doesn't matter if you leave visible brushstrokes – in fact, in a manga-based image, they can only add to the effect. Zooming by 80% shows no blending on the wings and only gentle blending on the feather. When you zoom out, it all appears as a nice texture without using fancy brushes or photo textures. It makes the image look more painterly as opposed to overdone, plastic digital painting. Overall it makes images more interesting and appealing to the eye and, of course, enables us to take a more informed look at the artist's technique.

> There's no need to use fancy brushes here. Manga is a simple style that looks to draw expressive images

01 Sketch

The sketch is done with a hard round brush with Opacity set to Pen Pressure. Use references if you need to; we didn't in this instance as the figure is not overly complicated. During sketching, try to transform the sketch in a way that suits you to find the best pose. Sometimes it takes several sketches before you find the right one. Our sketch is available on the disc if you wish to skip this stage.



02 Base colours

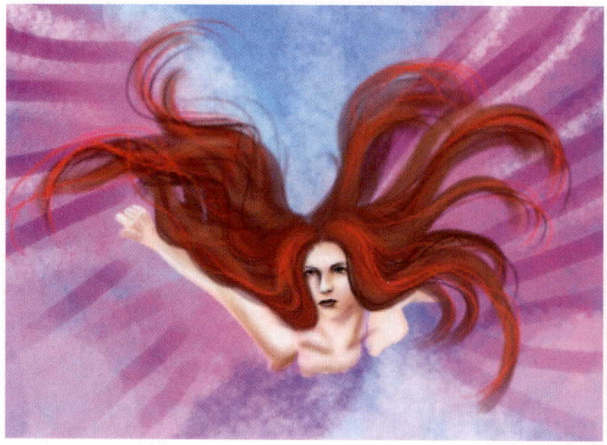
Fill the background layer with light blue, then paint with shades of pink, white and blue to create texture. On the same layer, paint base colours with the hard round brush – they will serve as a guide when you get to the main colouring (additionally, remember you can always repaint the background). Keep shades fairly muted, as it's just a first layer of colour. Once again, our background file is on the CD.

03 Face

Still with the hard round brush, but on a new layer, we can now set about painting the face. Keep the painting fairly loose and don't focus on the details. We recommend you vary the opacity of the brush while you paint to establish a greater level of complexity and depth. Smudge when needed with the Spatter brush, but don't overdo it. Keep brushstrokes visible.

04 Contrasting hair

Red is not generally used with pink but don't fret, it can only add to the image. Hair should be loose and flowing. Paint it with the same hard round brush with Size Control set to Pen Pressure, using light, flicking movements of your pen. Three colours are used from the supplied palette (which you can find on the disc).



06 Effects

Copy the wings layer, set it to Soft Light and lower the Opacity to 30%. Erase the edges of the copy layer and Merge Down. Again erase the edges of the wings and also lighten them with the Dodge tool using the airbrush. This makes wings more ethereal, lighter and more subtle. Add details where needed.

> "Shiny things are a distinct mark of the manga style... [and] can be easily done with an Overlay mode airbrush, using light, contrasting tones and colours"

Quick tip

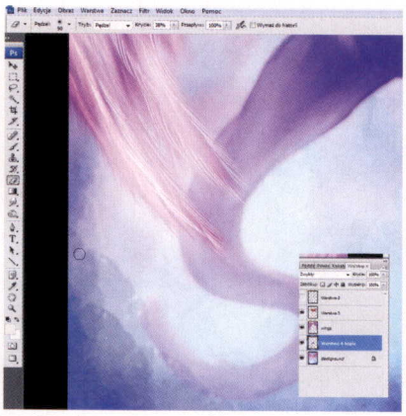
To make the whole image pop, merge all visible layers into one layer by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Opt/Alt+E. Set this layer on top of all layers and adjust it to Soft Light. Lower the Opacity to 5-10% and colours should be more vibrant and the image generally much more alive.

05 Winging it

On a new layer, we add the wings. Base colours are done with the hard round brush, then the colours are blended with a low opacity airbrush and final details done, again with the hard round brush and the lightest colour. We use no smudging, except for the base colour if you need it. The Dodge and Burn tools with low exposure are used to build shadows/highlights.

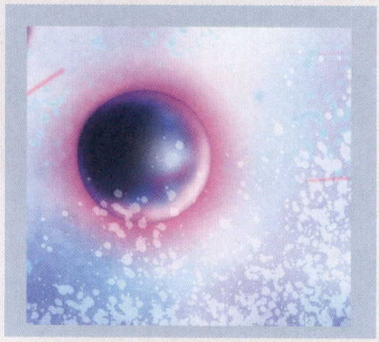
07 Erasing parts

To add to the illusion of distance and flowing in the air, erase parts of the dress base with the Eraser using airbrush and low opacity. Copy parts that are less visible, set to Soft Light and erase again and Merge Down. Continue until satisfied. Blur the edges with the Blur tool.



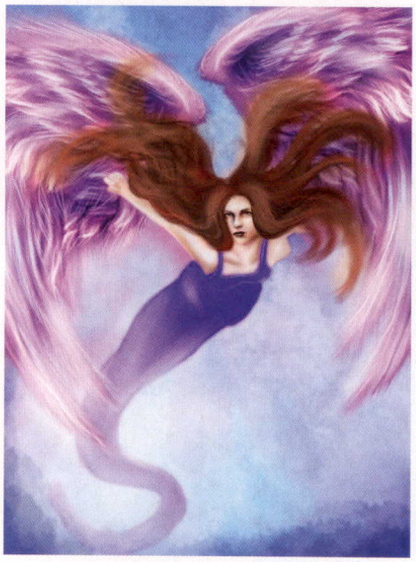
Shiny things

Shiny things are a distinct mark of the manga style in many images. Sparkling stars, shiny lace, patterns, brocade or simply flying balls, as seen here, can be easily done with an Overlay mode airbrush, using light, contrasting tones and colours. The key is not to overdo it. Use as many layers as you need, in conjunction with modes like Linear Dodge, Overlay and Multiply with light colours for shadows. Effects that can be achieved with these blending modes are endless.



08 Contrast

Increase the contrast of each layer using Curves, Levels and Hue/Saturation commands. Do not overdo it, or your image will lose its balance. The aim is to bring out light colours and deepen shadows but not too much; you will continue to work on this in further steps.



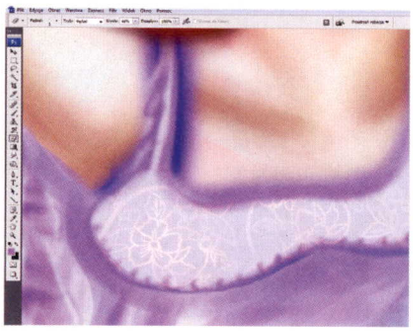
09 Flowing dress

Create a new layer and take the hard round brush with a light colour (not pure white). Mark the shape of the dress, shadows and lights, then use the Median filter set to 8px. This will blend the colours a bit. Continue with contrasting the folds until you're happy. Transform the dress so that it is more flowing.

> In order to create the illusion of distance and make the dress lighter, erase the edges with a low-opacity airbrush and make them disappear

12 Pattern

Using any pattern you like, decorate the dress. You can do it with either a specific brush or, like here, with free vector imagery from a stock site, transforming it to fit the shape of the dress. Press Cmd/Ctrl+G to create a clipping mask for the pattern layer – it will now stick to the dress shape.



15 Background

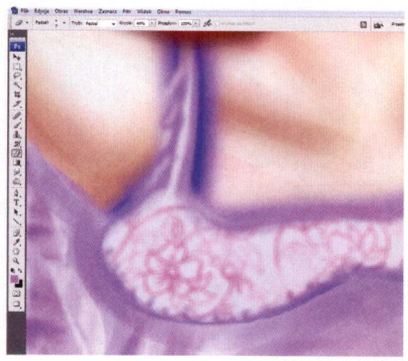
If you don't wish to use the background supplied on the CD, create a new layer above your background layer. Paint light beams behind the figure with a white colour, setting the layer to Soft Light mode. Repeat in different directions until it looks good. Change the colours from light blue through light violet to almost white.

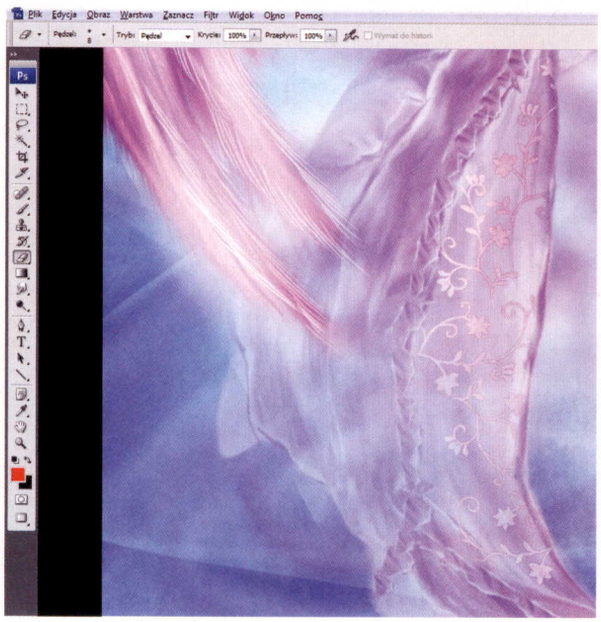
10 Dress details

Folds are tricky to paint, so spend some time on them to make sure they look right. Use live references if you need, like silk. To add shining effects, use an almost-white colour with the airbrush in Overlay mode in areas that are lit. Smudge gently with the Spatter brush.

13 Pattern 2

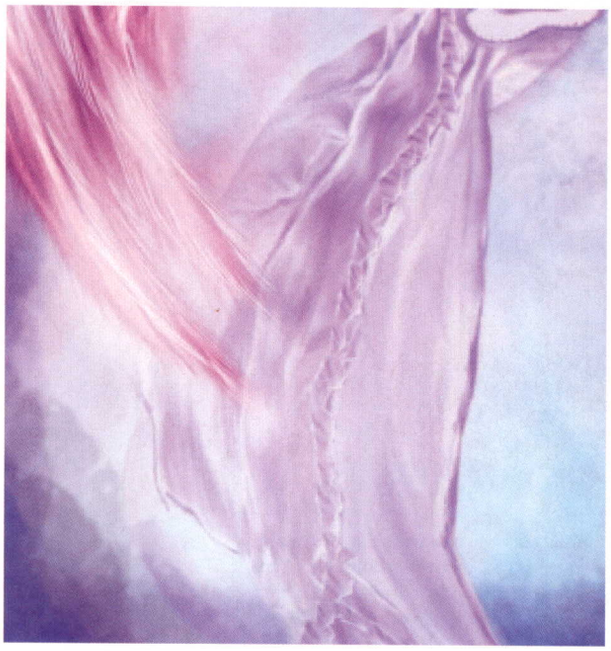
Copy the pattern layer, set a clipping mask again and move under the original pattern layer. Lower the saturation, darken the colour and set to Overlay mode. Lower the opacity and blur gently with Gaussian Blur. Erase parts that are hidden in shadowed areas and use the Dodge tool on lit areas conforming to the dress lighting.





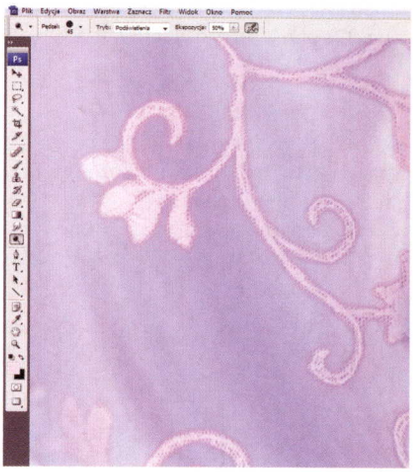
11 Illusion of distance

In order to create the illusion of distance and make the dress lighter, erase the edges with a low-opacity airbrush and make them disappear in the air. Copy the dress layer, set it to Soft Light, erase again and Merge Down. You can also change the colour and saturation.



14 Pattern 3

A different pattern is used on the rest of the dress; this time it's a custom foliage brush used on a new layer in Normal mode. The rest of the process uses the same workflow as the previous step. Don't forget to shade the pattern according to the dress shading.

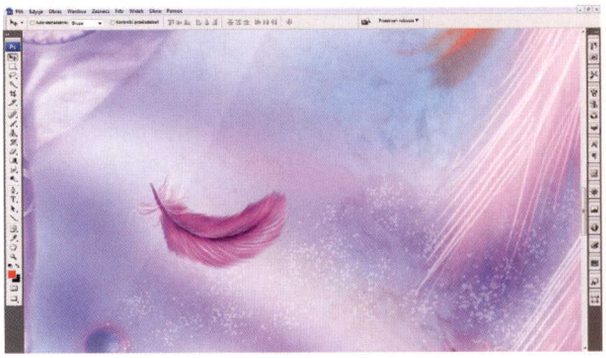


16 Ready for her close-up

On the close-up view in the screenshot (left), you can see how the dress and pattern are merged together seamlessly and how the whole dress flows diaphanously in the air. If you place a stronger level of light behind the figure, it will make it pop more distinctly. The colour of the dress has been modified to blend better into the background.

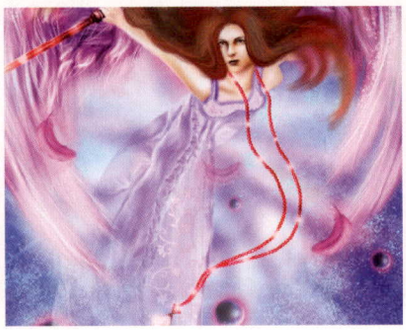
17 Sparkle, sparkle, sparkle

Set your hard round brush to Scattering at a high number and, with a small-diameter brush, spread some dust with a light pink, almost white shade on a new layer. Lower the opacity a little. Paint in the feathers with a hard round standard brush. To make things easier, paint one feather and Copy and Paste it several times, transforming the original to create an interesting range of sizes and angles.



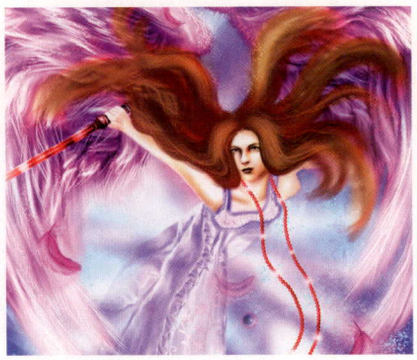
18 Details

Now we will add more movement to the image. Here it's done by painting a long necklace with shining gems, moving away from the woman's body. This makes the image more dynamic. More shiny balls have been added as part of the background and the sword has been painted using various references.



19 Contrast again

The hair needs tweaking next. The easiest thing to do is to add a new layer on top of the hair and paint shadows with a large airbrush using a mid-tone hair colour. Then set the layer to Multiply and lower the opacity. Add loose strands of hair to increase the illusion of movement.



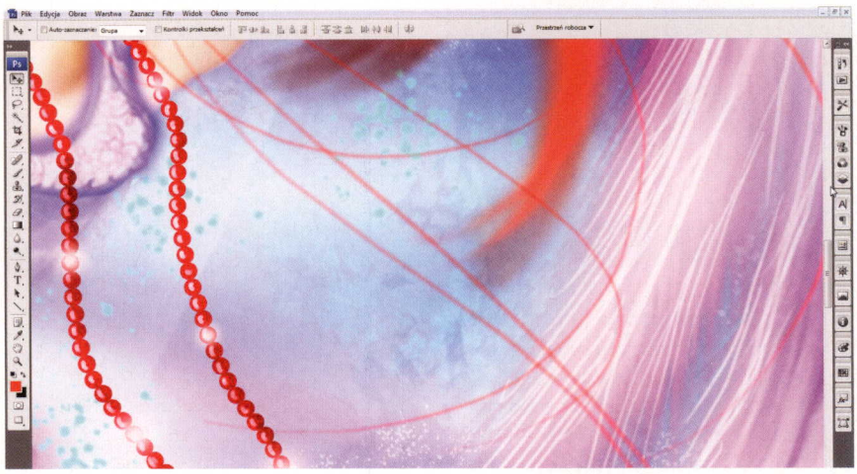
Finding line art

We have provided the original sketch for this tutorial in the resource disc, but if you are looking to improve your digital painting and colouring skills, and need some sketches to practise with, then there are plenty of generous artists out there who make sketches available publicly for exactly this purpose.

Here are a couple of good links for finding linework: www.deviantart.com (search in Resources>Stock Images for 'line art'). Alternatively, you can try www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?t=184 where you will find a small selection of quirky line art to practise on, courtesy of Cool Surface.

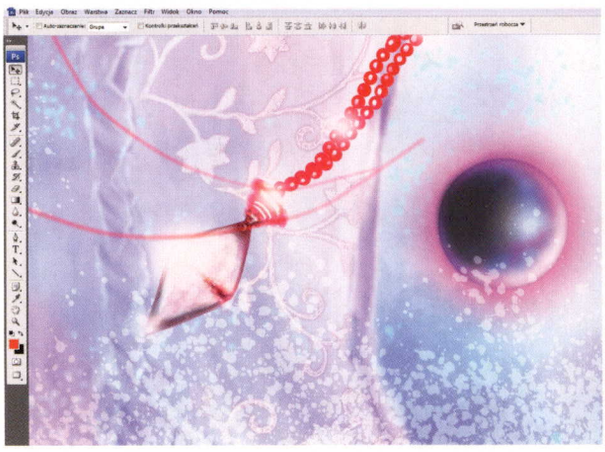
20 Strands of hair add movement

Here is a close-up of hair strands from the previous step. They're painted with a hard round brush, 100% Opacity, on a new layer. Then a Gaussian Blur has been gently applied and the edges of the strands have been erased very lightly. Every strand that doesn't follow the main hair line (ie flyaway hairs) adds greater movement and drama to your image.



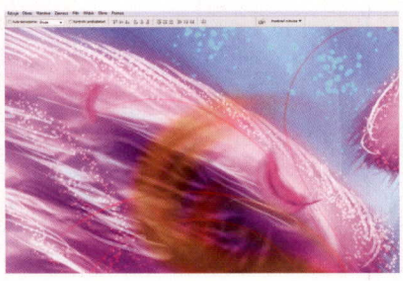
21 Dust/balls

Here's a close-up of the dust and one of the shiny balls. All elements that are not in main focus should be less saturated than the main subject of the image or they may distract the viewer. Dust is covering the dress and wings a little because we don't want to make the image flat. Use the illusion of distance, a low opacity, transparency and saturation to create your manga vision.



22 Movement

The easiest way to add movement to hair is selecting parts of it with the Lasso tool, feathering the selection by 25-30px and using the Motion Blur filter. Play with the settings until you're satisfied; just remember not to overuse it. All parts that are light like loose feathers, hair, edges of the dress, etc, can be filtered with Motion Blur to heighten the sense of movement.



> The easiest way to add movement to hair is selecting parts of it with the Lasso tool, feathering the selection by 25-30px and using the Motion Blur filter... until you're satisfied

showcase

THOMAS EGAN

TITLE Flight is Freedom
WEBSITE http://arke1.deviantart.com/

"It was my intention to create a very dynamic and playful image expressing the feelings associated with freedom and flight. The energetic colours and dynamic splashes used in this photo illustration help convey these particular feelings. The image was pieced together using standard photo illustration and manipulation techniques. There was also some significant use of the new Puppet Warp tool feature found in Photoshop CS5. I used this feature to sculpt and manipulate the splashes with a fair amount of control."

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Jo Denning
www.jodenning.co.uk

Jo is a British freelance artist and graphic designer based in Switzerland. She is self taught in both design and art, and has a passion for both. She has over seven years' experience.

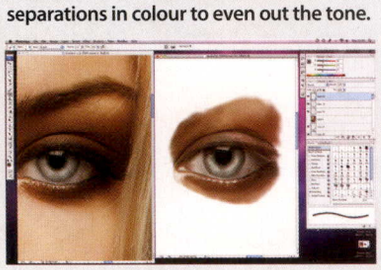
Source files

There are no files on the CD. We used the iStockphoto.com image number '11591785' as a reference, but you may wish to use your own portrait photo.

> By using the reference image as a hidden layer (as well as on a separate canvas for constant reference), you can – if need be – check the proportions of your image by switching the layer visibility rapidly on and off

Silky smooth

Using a soft brush with a low opacity for the majority of the painting allows us to blend the pixels more easily, while gradually building up the colours. A hard brush is too harsh for blending and has defined edges, which will not allow for smooth surfaces such as skin. When blending tones, stick with the low opacity soft brush – and by colour-picking from the original photograph – the skin should start to blend. Then, by eye-dropping colours from your painting and with a larger brush, you can paint between any separations in colour to even out the tone.



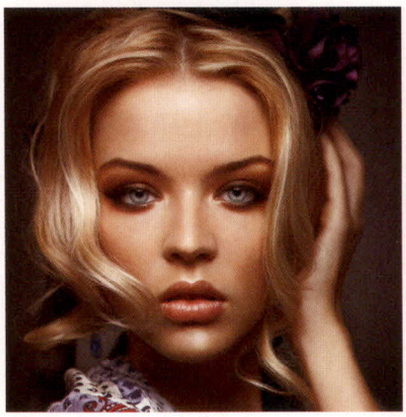
With digital art becoming increasingly popular and photorealism now more and more in demand – being used in all modern games and even in films – we take a look at how we can achieve photorealistic results through digital painting in Photoshop. Whether you're looking to re-create a futuristic landscape, a beautiful sunset, your neighbour's cat or (as in this case), a portrait, this tutorial aims to help guide you through some of the basic tips and tricks which can be used to create a stunning, photorealistic painting.

While an understanding of traditional painting is beneficial, it is not a prerequisite as this tutorial will also help to kick-start those of you who may never have picked up a pencil or paintbrush in your lives! Although composition is important, technique is everything. You can have all the proportions correct and be completely let down by the painting technique.

By using the reference image as a hidden layer (as well as on a separate canvas for constant reference), you can – if need be – check the proportions of your image by switching the layer visibility rapidly on and off. As we are not aiming to trace the image, this should simply help distinguish any parts of your drawing/painting which need attention. You can then refer back to the original reference image to pay more attention to any problem areas. A tablet is highly recommended for this tutorial. Give it a go!

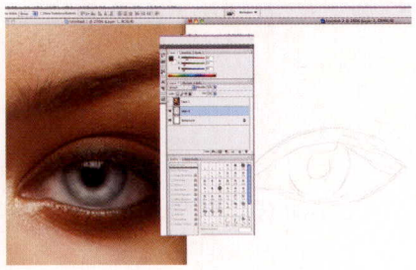
01 Reference layer

Start by opening up your reference image, or download the image that we used as a reference. Then duplicate the image (Image>Duplicate), hide the reference layer on the original and create a new layer. You should now have a blank canvas to start your painting. Ensure that all new elements of your painting are on separate layers.



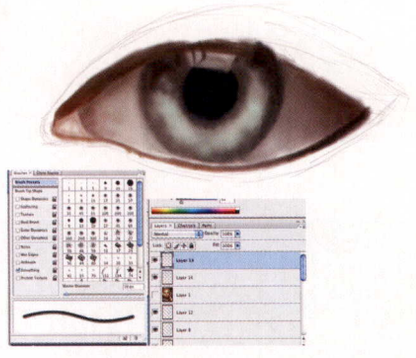
02 Sketching

Use the duplicated image as your reference and start roughly sketching the shape of the eye using a small basic brush on your blank canvas. If you find your drawing differs in scale from the reference layer when you switch on its visibility, scale the reference layer to fit your drawing (Edit>Transform>Scale+Shift). You can then check for discrepancies between the two much more easily.



03 Painting

With the Eyedropper tool, select the whitest part of the eye. Use a basic brush, around 25px, 0% Hardness, Opacity 14%. Gradually paint in the eye colour by picking the colours from the separate reference photo. Soft brushes make it easier to blend and the low opacity allows you to build up the colour gradually.

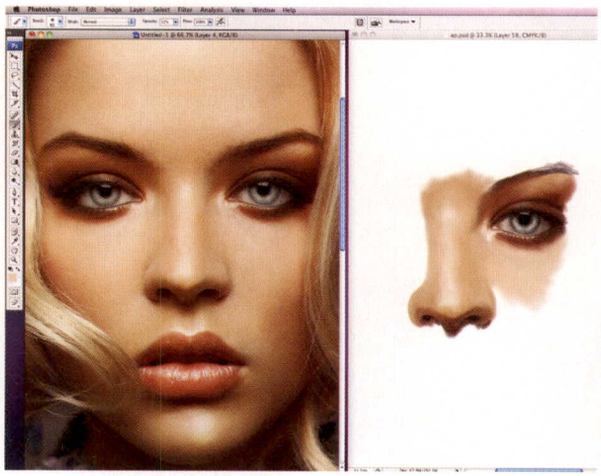


04 Adding definition

Once you're happy with the colours of the eye, zoom in closely to the eye on both your drawing and on the reference image. Using a small, slightly harder brush (28%), approximately 9px with a higher Opacity of 25%, begin slowly developing the sharper details such as the lower and upper eyelids, the pupil and the creases around the eyes, etc.

05 More features

At any time, you can flash on your reference layer to check your progress, helping you pinpoint any mistakes. With the layer turned off again, start by painting the basic shape of the nose with a brush of around 70px, 0% Hardness and 14% Opacity. We will then refine the nose as we did with the eyes.



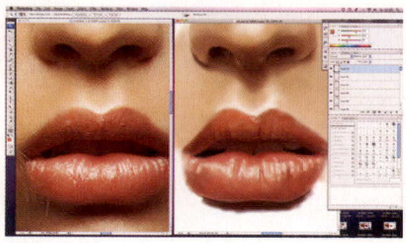
06 Lip glossing

Once you have sketched the shape of the lips, start by blocking them in with one colour. Start creating 'grooves' on the lips with a slightly darker colour and a 9px brush, building these up. Once you have the lines in place, use a very light pink colour to highlight these lines, usually only to one direction, with variable sizing.

> Each strand of hair needs to be drawn individually as there is no quick fix if you want it to look real. It's always good to add flyaway hairs

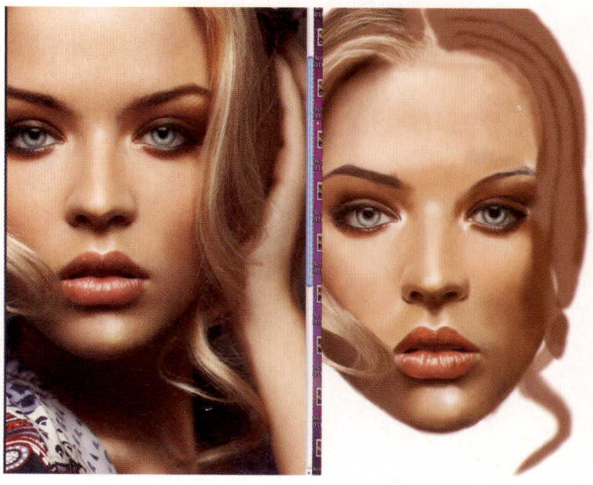
07 Creating shadows

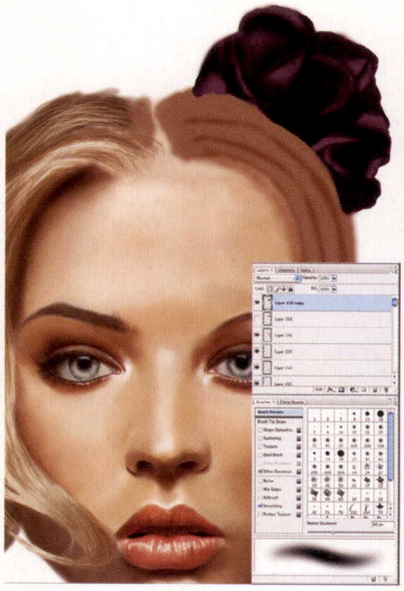
Once you have the highlights drawn, you may find the lips look a little flat. Start picking the colours of the shadows from the photograph and, with a large soft brush, lightly lay on the shadows. You can then move this layer to sit behind the highlights, or play around with some blending effects for some nice results (Layer>Layer Style>Blending Options).



08 Understanding hair

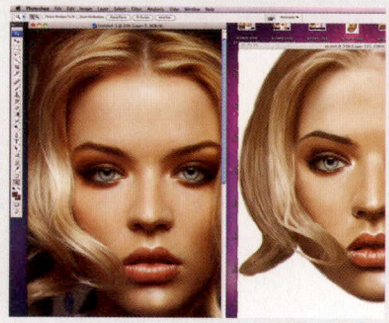
Now draw a solid shape mimicking where the hair will be, (Opacity 80%), using a dark blonde colour. Next use a 30% Opacity brush, with Shape Dynamics enabled and gradually increase some of the colour by using a subtly lighter tone, and continue building up the lightness of the hair, gradually decreasing the brush size while, at the same time, increasing the opacity.





Painting hair

Painting hair is always a challenge, but by starting off with a dark colour and gradually building up the different tones, getting lighter with each layer, you stand in good stead to end up with a realistic result. When the hair is starting to take form, you can switch on Brush Dynamics with a higher opacity (and smaller/harder) brush and start painting more detailed strands. Each strand needs to be drawn individually as there is no quick fix if you want it to look real. It's always good to add some flyaway hairs afterwards to make it look even more believable.



09 Flower power

We can now concentrate on the flower in the hair. With the Eyedropper, pick the darkest shade of the flower and with a harder brush (75%) and 100% Opacity, draw the shape. Send this layer to the back (Layer>Arrange>Send to back). Select the Dodge tool and begin painting the highlights on the same layer with Range set to Midtones and Exposure to 20%.

10 Handy work

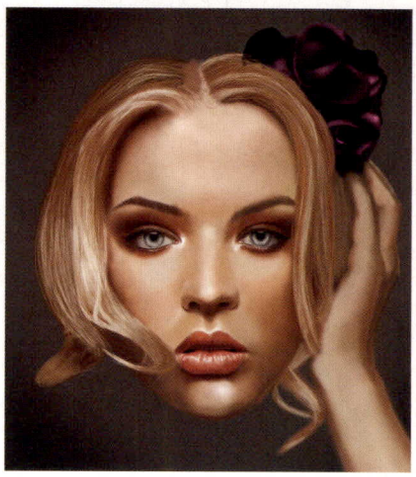
To draw the hand, create a guide layer and arrange to the back. Next, loosely sketch the shape of the hand. Once satisfied, create another layer and disable the Shape Dynamics. Start painting the midtones, and then shadows. Once shadows are in place, select a large soft brush and begin brushing in the highlights. You can delete the guide layer now.

Quick tip

By using the '[' and ']' keys when the brush is selected, you can increase and decrease the brush size while painting, saving you valuable time – and effort. By holding down Shift with the '[' and ']' keys, you can quickly change the hardness/ softness of your brush.

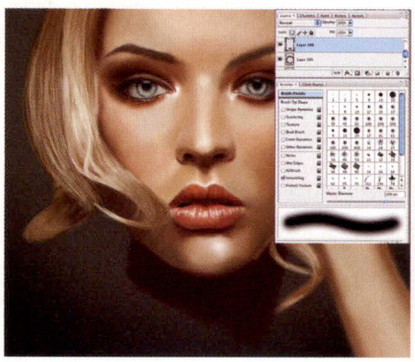
11 Background importance

We should be halfway there now! Pick the dark colour from the photo reference and, on a new layer, use the Fill tool to fill the empty layer. Send the layer to the back. If the dark layer shows through any of the skin/blouse etc, mask or erase any leakage and add the large highlighted area.



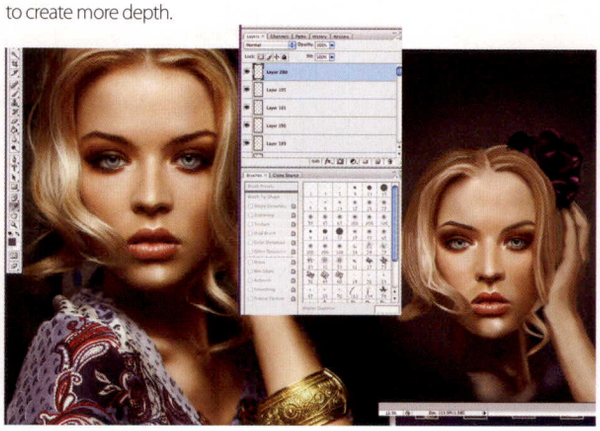
12 Body building

Next, we will need to start work on the neck. Create a new layer and send it to the back (as before). By increasing the softness of the brush, we are able to create the illusion of the neck being more out of focus. Select the lightest colour on the chest and block out the shape of the neck and chest.



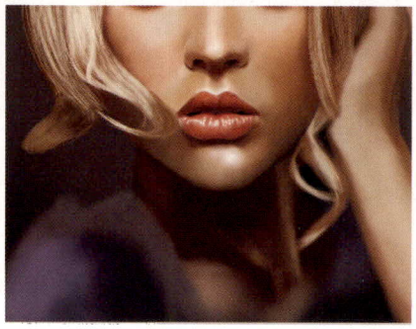
13 Deep shadows

The neck contains some deep shadows, so select a large brush of 250px with 0% Hardness and 17% Opacity, and start 'spotting in' the shadows. You might find it now looks too dark, so select a lighter colour and a smaller brush (Opacity 11%) and start painting in a few authentic-looking highlights to create more depth.



14 The blouse

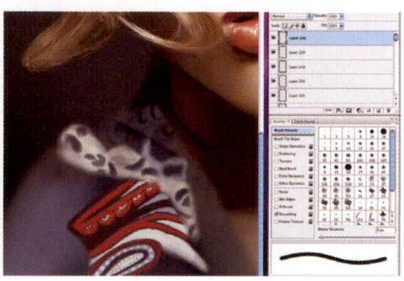
Select a midtone from the blouse and block in its shape. Next, pick a lighter tone of the same colour and start painting in highlights and shadows. Blend highlights in by colour-picking the shade you just laid down, then using a low opacity soft brush to defocus the highlights' edges.



> "To increase the intensity of the eyes, pick a burnt orange colour, and with a reasonably large soft brush with 25% Opacity, circle around the eyes"

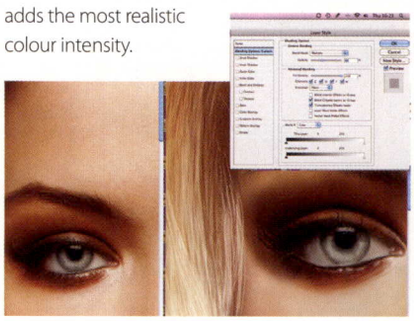
15 Pretty patterns

Now you have the basic shape of the blouse with highlights, you can select a brush with 75% Hardness and 80% Opacity. Start painting in the most focused parts of the pattern. By reducing the hardness and the opacity, you can then work on the less in-focus parts.



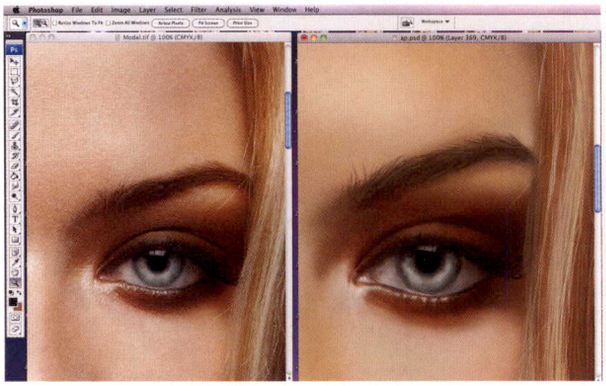
16 The eyes have it!

To increase the intensity of the eyes, pick a burnt orange colour, and with a reasonably large soft brush with 25% Opacity, circle around the eyes. Bring up Blending Options (as before), and choose either Color Burn or Multiply (ensure Preview is switched on). Choose the one that adds the most realistic colour intensity.



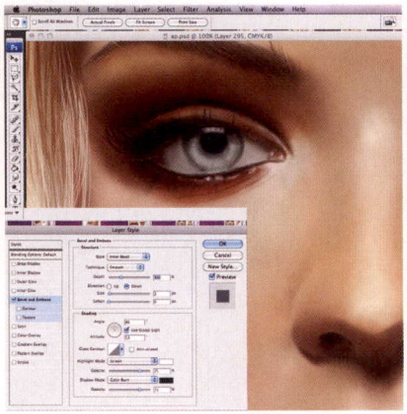
17 Lashes of style

Eyelashes should be drawn with Brush Dynamics enabled. The brush should be 12px with 85% Hardness and 80% Opacity. If using a tablet, the Size Control should be set to Pen Pressure. Begin by drawing curved 'tick' shapes for the top lashes and build this up. The opacity should decrease for the bottom lashes, and there should be fewer.



18 Skin texture

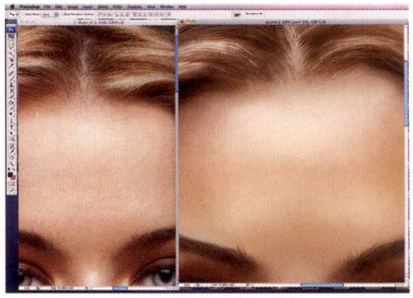
To add texture to the skin in the painting, you can select a dry media brush and scarcely dab the brush at a low opacity, or alternatively, you can paint very small dots with a basic brush. Then select Layer>Layer Style> Blending Options>Bevel and Emboss, which will effectively give you the appearance of subtle pores in the skin.



> If you find that the skin tone on your painting looks 'blotchy' or uneven, pick a large, very soft brush with very low opacity

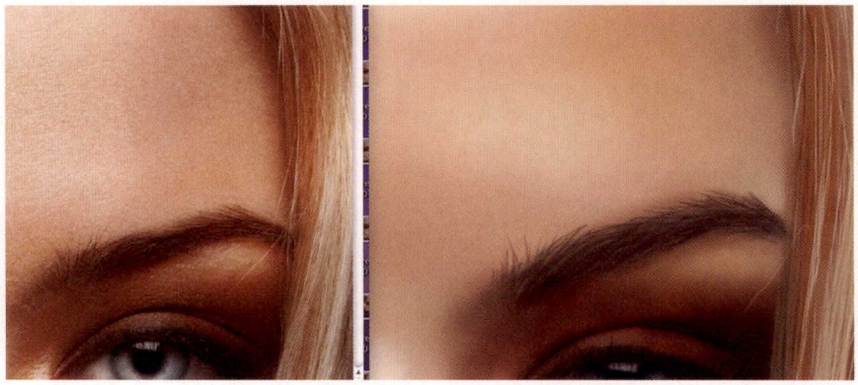
19 Skin tone and definition

If you find the skin tone looks 'blotchy', pick a large, very soft brush with very low opacity. Start by picking a colour on your painting near the 'blotchy' patch with the Eyedropper and slowly integrate that colour over the uneven skin. Keep picking colours around uneven parts and painting until you achieve a smoother finish.



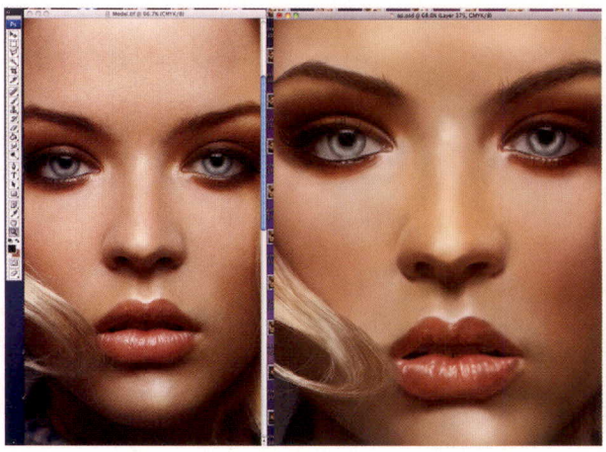
20 Eyebrow finish

To make the eyebrows look believable, we must first paint in some subtle shadows, followed by the shape of the brow. Once the shape is defined, enable Shape Dynamics with the same settings that were used for the hair. Then start painting in small strokes to flow in the same direction, with one or two stray hairs to make them appear more authentic.



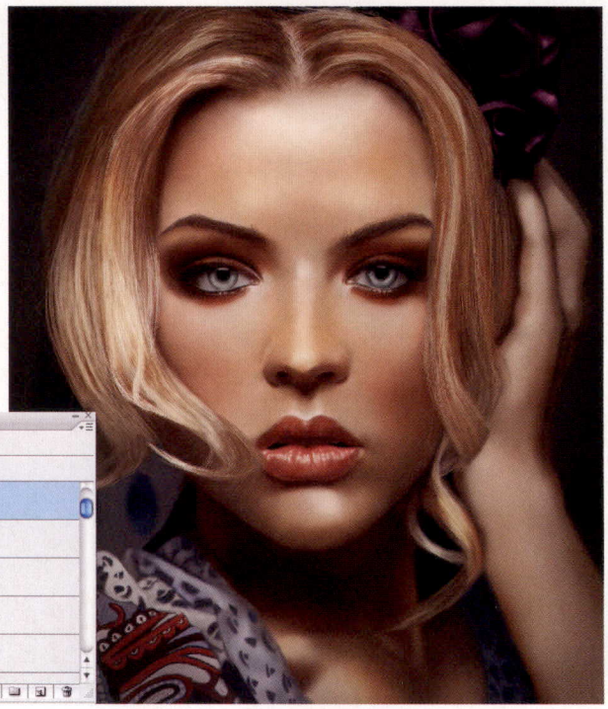
21 Warming up

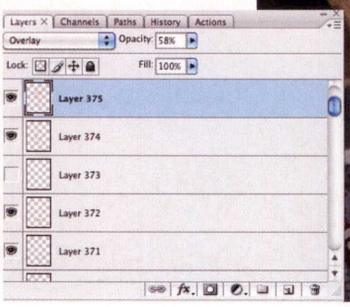
If at any point your portrait is lacking in vibrancy and saturation – which can easily happen as you are painting at low opacity – select a large brush of around 300px, with 0% Hardness and 20% Opacity. Select an orange/pink hue and paint sparingly over the face. Then select Overlay as the layer style.



22 Review your painting

Take a few steps back from your screen to see the results. Refine any highlights and uneven skin tones. Bring the reference layer to the top of the Layers palette, and click on and off to see any parts that 'move' when the layer is clicked off, which you can then refine. Once you're finished, save your painting.





CATHRINE LANGWAGEN

TITLE | Freedom
WEBSITE | www.cassiopeiaart.com

"I had just read an article about freedom and how we all strive for freedom in different ways, being wrongly imprisoned, or just struggling to live up to expectations. I wanted to depict the freedom we all long for, so using Photoshop and a photo of my sister standing in water, I added details such as hair and feathers, masking out parts as necessary. The pale colours were all chosen to emphasise serenity, and the gold and red is for strength."

View more Photoshop-related products at imagineshop.co.uk
Plus back issues and subscriptions

Create your own art gallery for FREE today!
• Meet other artists • Showcase your paintings • Rate and comment on artwork
Visit us online at www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk

Workspaces There are the usual workspaces available, but the most used ones can sit here. Live Workspaces save any changes you have made to palette locations

Brushes A completely new Mixer Brush, as well as customisable Bristle Tips, means that Photoshop CS5 makes an incredibly powerful digital painting application, with more authentic results than ever

Mini Bridge Access Bridge from within Photoshop. Drag content into your projects, create HDR merges directly from stacks within Bridge and browse for multimedia content

3D options 3D has been greatly enhanced in Photoshop CS5, but you will also find the usual tools in the same place as CS4 Extended

tip

Get great monochrome images by using the new LAB – Black & White Technique action

Content-Aware Fill Available as a Fill option or by selecting the tickbox in the main Options bar when using the Spot Healing Brush tool, this essential new feature will save you time when editing objects out of images

CS Live Collaborate with clients and colleagues by using the new Adobe Creative Review service, accessible here

PHOTOSHOP CS5

Photoshop CS5 is here, and we reckon it's the most impressive upgrade yet. We take you on a tour of the program's new features and additions

Photoshop CS5 has been officially announced, and we're excited! With a teaser October 2009's Photoshop World, it's only been a matter of time before the grand unveiling. With a new-look box giving it a much more modern and designer feel, plus a massive list of new features and improvements, we reckon this is a bigger jump from CS4 than we've seen from previous incarnations.

As with the last two versions, CS5 will come in both the standard and Extended flavours, with the latter offering improved 3D and motion graphics functionality. Adobe has recognised three key groups of user of Photoshop – photographers; web, print and interactive designers; and video professionals, motion graphics designers and VFX artists – and has ensured that whichever group you fall into, there is something to encourage you to upgrade your system.

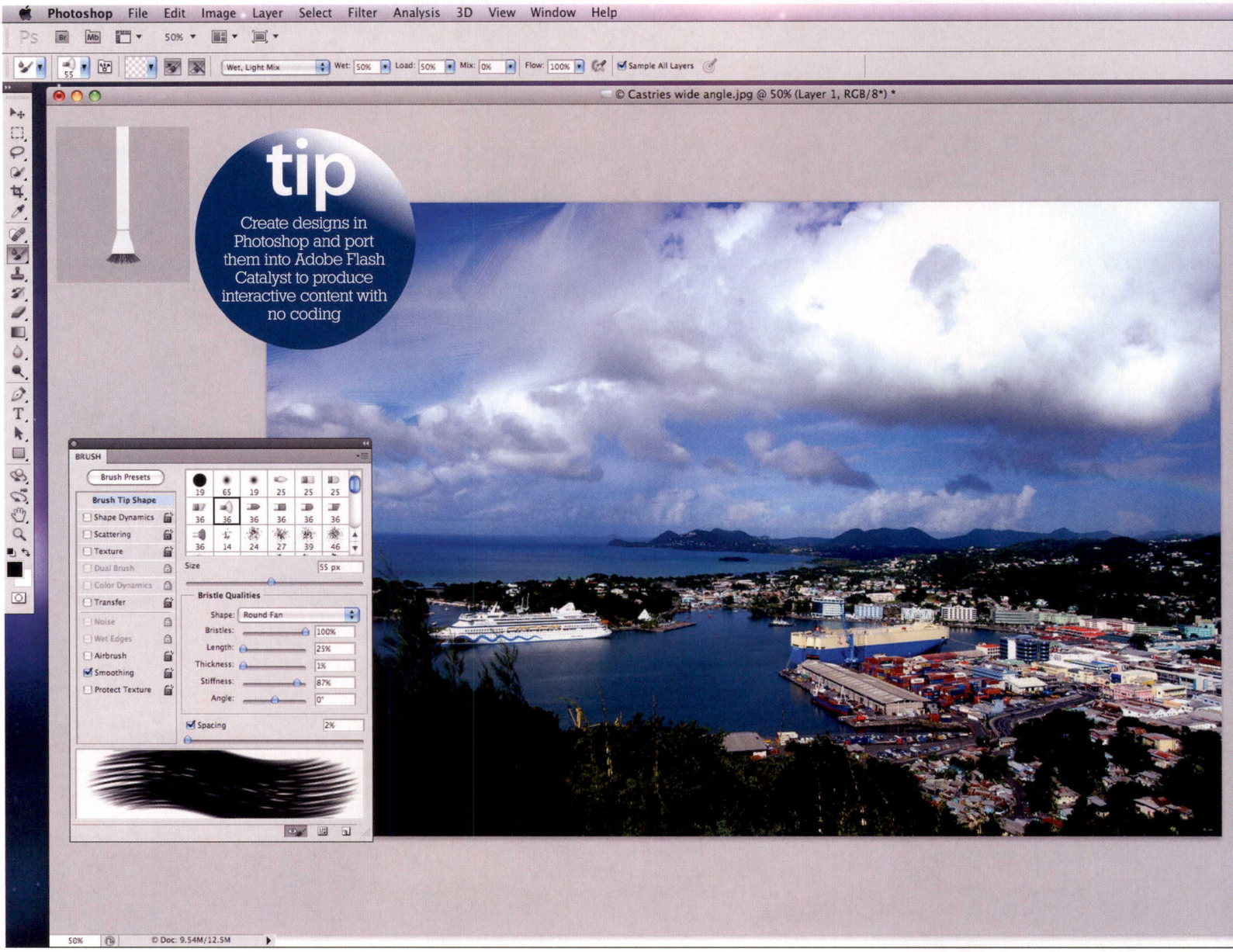
At the time of writing this feature, pricing had not yet been announced. However, we know that Photoshop CS5 Extended will also appear in four Creative Suites: Design Premium, Web Premium, Production Premium and the Master Collection. Photoshop CS5 standard comes in the Design Standard Suite, which seems set to be a more affordable suite for designers and digital artists.

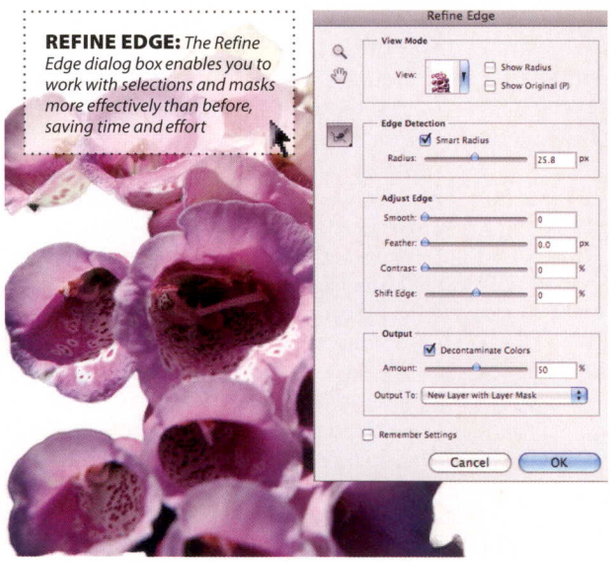
Over the next few pages we'll run you through the key new features of CS5, followed by a series of tutorials and features in the coming pages of this book.

TOP TOOLS

With every release of Photoshop, there are certain tools that make the headlines and promise to change the way we work. CS5 is no exception and there are a few real innovations in the mix.

For example, intelligent selection technology is integrated to enable you to make and refine complex selections and masks faster than ever. This technology detects edges more accurately, and an option to turn on Decontaminate Colors eliminates background colours from the edge of a selection. Edge Detection refinements include a Smart Radius checkbox, which automatically matches the best selection approach with the subject's edge type. There are various View options within the Refine Edge dialog box so that you can quickly check the quality of the selection that you have created.





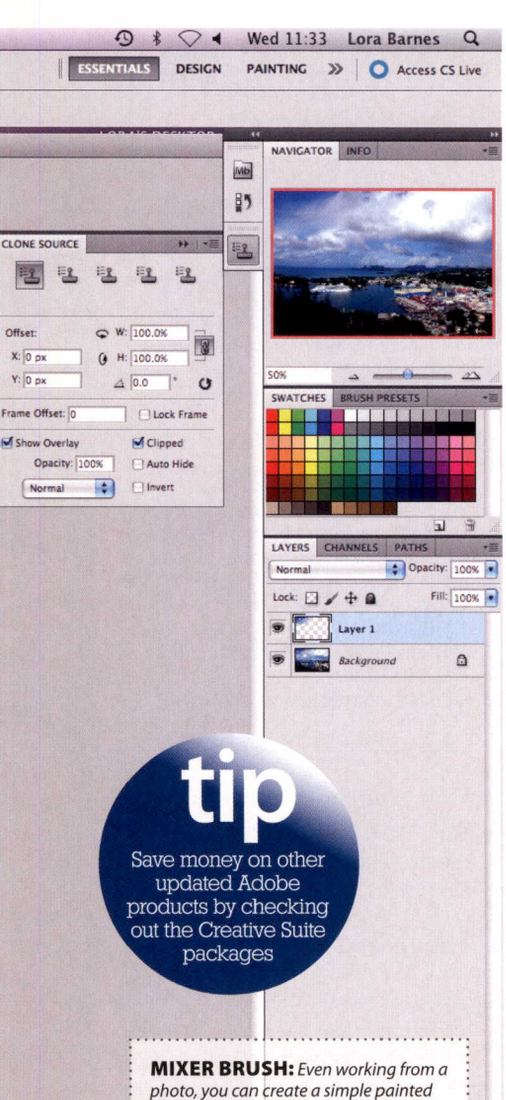
REFINE EDGE: *The Refine Edge dialog box enables you to work with selections and masks more effectively than before, saving time and effort*

This works really well with the new Content-Aware Fill, building on the popularity of Content-Aware Scaling launched in CS4. This is a complex algorithm that can intelligently fill a selection area with what Photoshop believes lies behind it. So, if you cut an object out of a scene, instead of the usual background showing through, you'll now get an accurate fill based on the lighting, tone and noise of the areas surrounding the edges of the selection. Content-Aware Fill can be turned on when using the Spot Healing Brush tool to give more accurate results when retouching. It's also a new option from the Fill menu in the Use drop-down to quickly fill a selected area.

A completely new addition to Photoshop is the Puppet Warp tool, which has been brought in from Adobe's After Effects. This is a new Transform tool that enables you to 'pin' anchor points on your image and handles to warp the image around the anchor. You can literally spend hours playing around with moving body parts for fun, but it has plenty of practical applications too, such as warping images into text for quick but effective results.

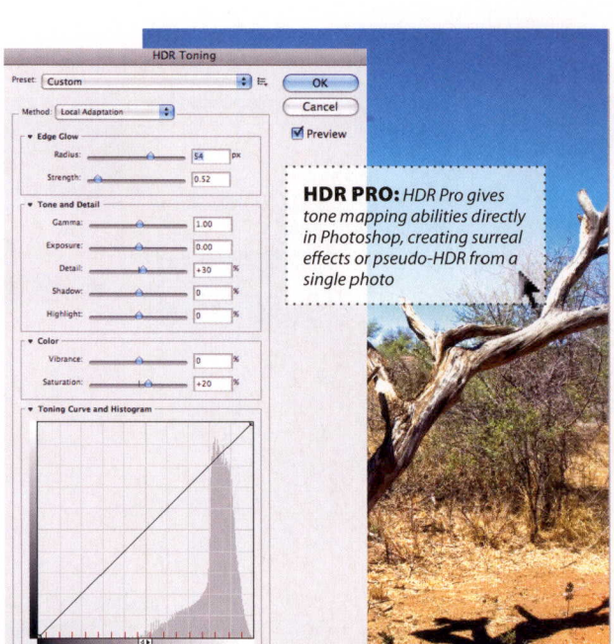
Better brushes

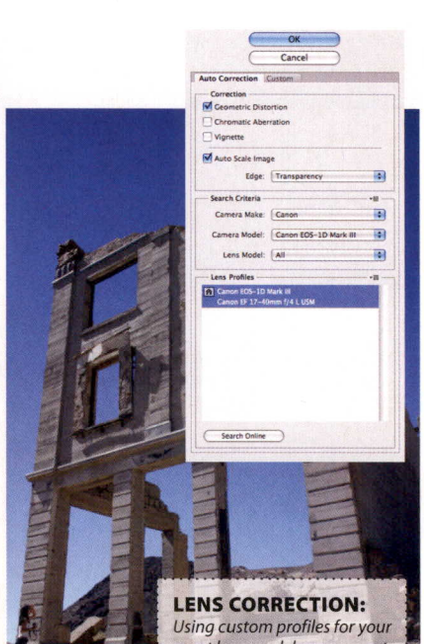
Photoshop is already a popular program for digital painting, but with the changes made to the brushes, it is more natural to work with and more intuitive. First, there is the addition of the Mixer Brush, which lets you pick up multiple colours and blend them onto your canvas, giving a realistic natural media effect. For those not naturally talented at painting, even working over a photo using this brush dry (ie without any paint colours loaded up) will start to blend colours together and give a painted look. The Mixer Brush can be tailored to suit your needs, with options to adjust



tip

Save money on other updated Adobe products by checking out the Creative Suite packages





the wetness of the colours, the amount of paint loaded onto the brush, the mixing rate and whether the brush is refilled, cleaned (or both) after each stroke, for an authentic feel.

Another big improvement comes in the form of Bristle Tips, which enables you to customise the brush's bristle, including the shape, length, stiffness, angle and spacing. There is a Bristle Brush Preview to show you how your brush looks as you make these changes, and all the tips can be saved. Expect a whole host of custom brushes to begin appearing after CS5 goes on sale. We'll be looking at the painting options in more detail next month.

Photo-editing extras

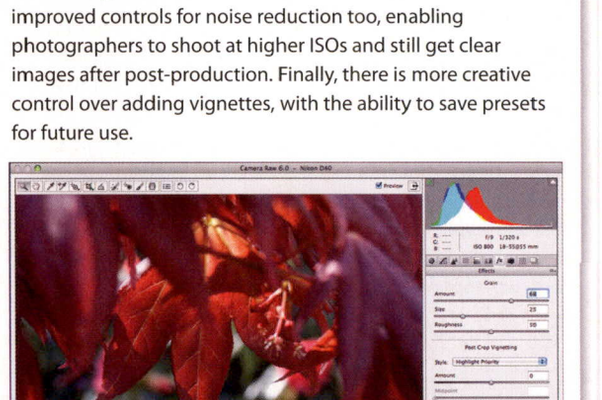
Some of the biggest changes in Photoshop CS5 are aimed at photographers and image retouchers. As with previous versions of Photoshop, the Camera Raw plug-in is present and correct, and this has received its own set of upgrades (see the boxout on the right).

One of our favourite changes to CS5 is that of better HDR image creation. We've been using plug-ins to achieve the sort of effects that we want, but CS5 promises to give better results directly in the program. As well as combining images into an HDR exposure, HDR Pro offers tone mapping options so you can achieve surreal and photorealistic effects, depending on your preference. HDR Pro offers an enhanced dialog box for creative control over the way in which the HDR image is created. For example, ghosting is dealt with by having one image automatically selected as a source image for lining up the other exposures. You can change the source image used manually to get exactly the merge you want. The tone mapping tools can be edited and saved as presets, making it easy to apply a specific look to a batch of photos. It is also possible to apply tone mapping to a single image with HDR Toning to give a pseudo-HDR effect. HDR imagery can be created simply in black and white as well.

One key problem for photographers is that of distortion caused by the lens used. The Lens Correction feature in Photoshop CS5 has been updated to help with this common problem, correcting geometric distortion, chromatic aberration and vignetting. The feature works automatically, but there are manual adjustment controls available under the Custom tab, and it is

Camera Raw 6

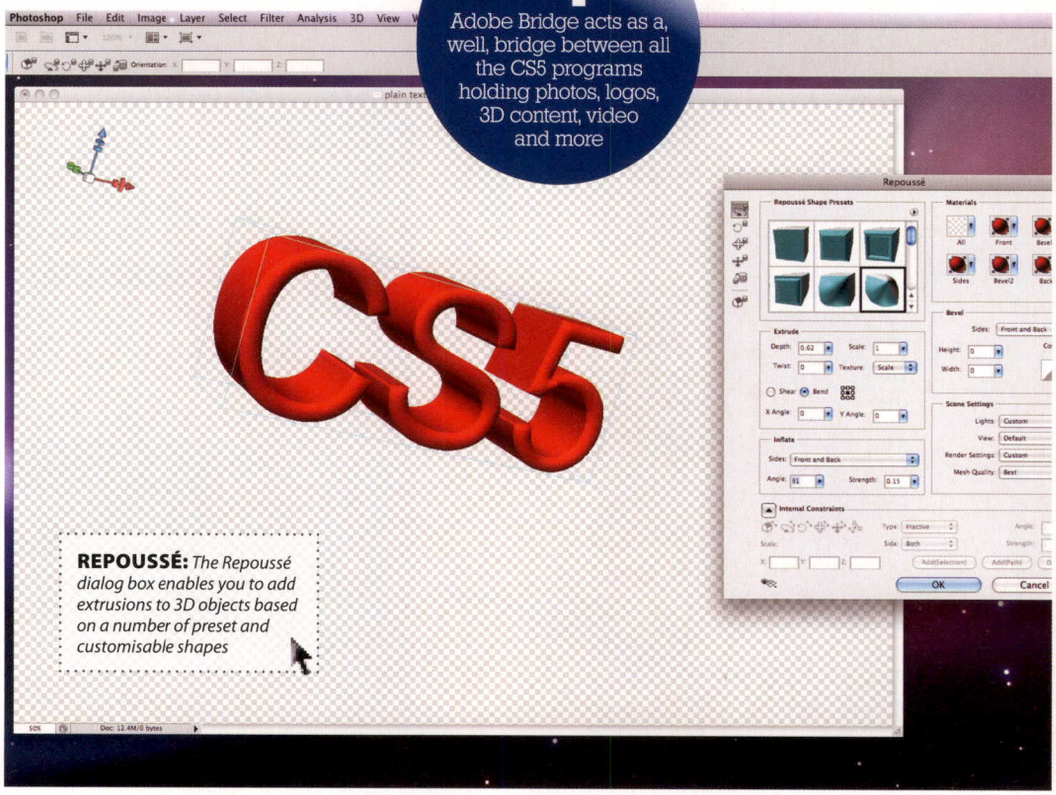
This essential RAW-editing plug-in supports over 275 models of camera by default, which means that almost any camera that shoots in RAW format can be brought into Photoshop CS5 directly. Images can be edited more heavily than in previous versions within the Camera Raw dialog box. Sharpening is updated to produce fewer artefacts and better control over the results. You can add grain to images to create traditional film effects. Adding grain is non-destructive, and again there is a wide range of controls to customise the effect. There are improved controls for noise reduction too, enabling photographers to shoot at higher ISOs and still get clear images after post-production. Finally, there is more creative control over adding vignettes, with the ability to save presets for future use.



> "Another big improvement comes in the form of Bristle Tips, which enables you to customise the brush's bristle"

tip

Adobe Bridge acts as a, well, bridge between all the CS5 programs holding photos, logos, 3D content, video and more



REPOUSSÉ: *The Repoussé dialog box enables you to add extrusions to 3D objects based on a number of preset and customisable shapes*

System requirements

Mac OS

Multicore Intel processor
Mac OS X v10.5.7 or v10.6
2GB hard disk space for installation

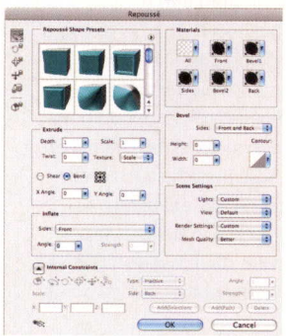
Windows

Intel Pentium 4 or AMD Athlon®
64 processor
Windows XP with SP3, Windows Vista Home Premium, Business, Ultimate or Enterprise with SP1 or Windows 7
1GB hard disk space for installation

Universal requirements

1GB RAM
1,024 x 768 display with qualified hardware-accelerated OpenGL graphics card, 16-bit colour and 256MB VRAM
Some GPU-accelerated features require graphics support for Shader Model 3.0 and OpenGL 2.0
DVD-ROM drive
QuickTime 7.6.2 software required for multimedia features
Broadband internet connection

Adobe Repoussé



Traditionally, Repoussé is a metalworking technique for embossing artwork on the surface of metal. Adobe Repoussé uses a similar concept to convert any 2D artwork into a 3D object, which can then be extruded in any direction to give depth to the object. This is brilliant for text effects, as you can simply type the text you want, then convert it to a text object and manipulate it in any direction with preset shapes available to make it easy to work with. Other effects, like Bevel and Emboss, can also be added, and the whole thing (or just sections) can be inflated. All of these options are found in the Repoussé dialog box.

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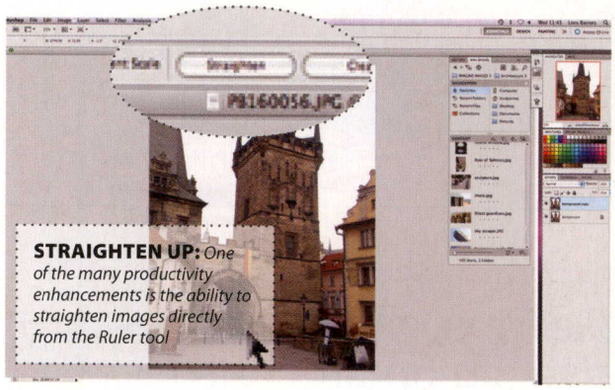

STRAIGHTEN UP: *One of the many productivity enhancements is the ability to straighten images directly from the Ruler tool*

also possible to download Lens Correction Profiles (LCP files) for popular lenses for accurate results, with a wide range of these LCP files included. If you want to get more in-depth, then you can download the Lens Profile Creator from Adobe Labs (**labs.adobe.com**) and create custom profiles for your exact setup based on submitted source photos.

Improved 3D control

Photoshop CS4 Extended was the first time that Adobe offered any measure of genuine 3D control in Photoshop. This has been taken a step further with CS5 Extended. 2D artwork can be easily converted into a 3D object using Repoussé (see the boxout on the left).

CS5 Extended comes with a variety of materials and textures that can be applied to 3D models. While there are plenty of presets included, there are a vast number of extra ones downloaded from the internet. In keeping with the community aspect, you can create your own materials and share them with others, as well as customise pre-existing materials in the dedicated 3D panel. Materials that are reflective can be rendered with Adobe's new Ray Tracer engine (ART). The ART 2.0 engine gives better performance and rendering speed, rendering progressively and with various customisation options, depending on your needs.

While many of the 3D panels look much as they did in CS4, there are new checkboxes and options included. It can be easy to overlook an extra tickbox, but they hide far more powerful features. The Catch Shadows option enables you to generate a shadow on the ground plane of a scene, then adjust it around other layers in your 3D scene, making it softer or harder to work with the different surfaces. HDR imagery can be used to light a scene, and depth of field can be added.

Performance gains

Adobe has been taking on board customer feedback in the creation of Photoshop CS5, which means there are a lot of little productivity tweaks designed to make the program easier and more intuitive to work with. Some of these are so tiny that you might not even realise they are there until you come to use them and notice what a big difference they make.

For example, you can now save 16-bit Photoshop documents as an 8-bit JPEG in one step, you can move a selection while the active layer is hidden, you can straighten images when using the Ruler tool, and you can set customisable defaults in the Layer Styles dialog.

CS4 introduced GPU-accelerated features, and there are more of them here. Mostly it's the new technologies and enhancements that work faster and more effectively with hardware acceleration, including Repoussé. Also, when cropping, you can display either a Rule of Thirds or standard Grid view, you can dynamically resize brushes, and display a colour sample ring with the Eyedropper.

As with CS4, you can create custom panels using Configurator and you can create your own workspaces that can be switched between in a flash. Live Workspaces means that any changes you make to a task-specific workspace are saved if you switch to a different workspace and back again, so palettes remain where you left them. All these enhancements are designed to give you better productivity as you work.

showcase

JOSH OVERTON

TITLE Stoop To Conquer
WEBSITE www.overtongraphics.com

"I was experimenting with some paint splat textures and decided to duplicate and rotate them several times and it looked like a wing. So I took it further and merged it with a stock image of a bald eagle, resulting in the finished image. I find it important to experiment on days when you are free from work so you can continue learning stress free and often the results can be great and lead to new techniques."

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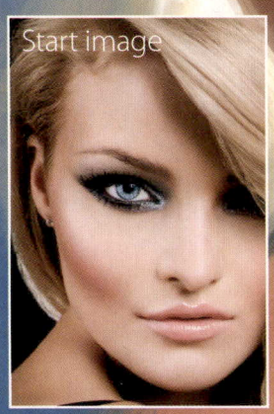
A dry (ie, with no paint loaded) Mixer Brush can be used on a new layer above a photo, with Sample All Layers selected, cloning the colours of the photo with every brush stroke



TURN TO PAGE 224 FOR A TUTORIAL ON THIS IMAGE »»»

DIGITAL PAINTING IN PHOTOSHOP CS5

We take an in-depth look at how digital painting has been transformed in the latest version of Photoshop

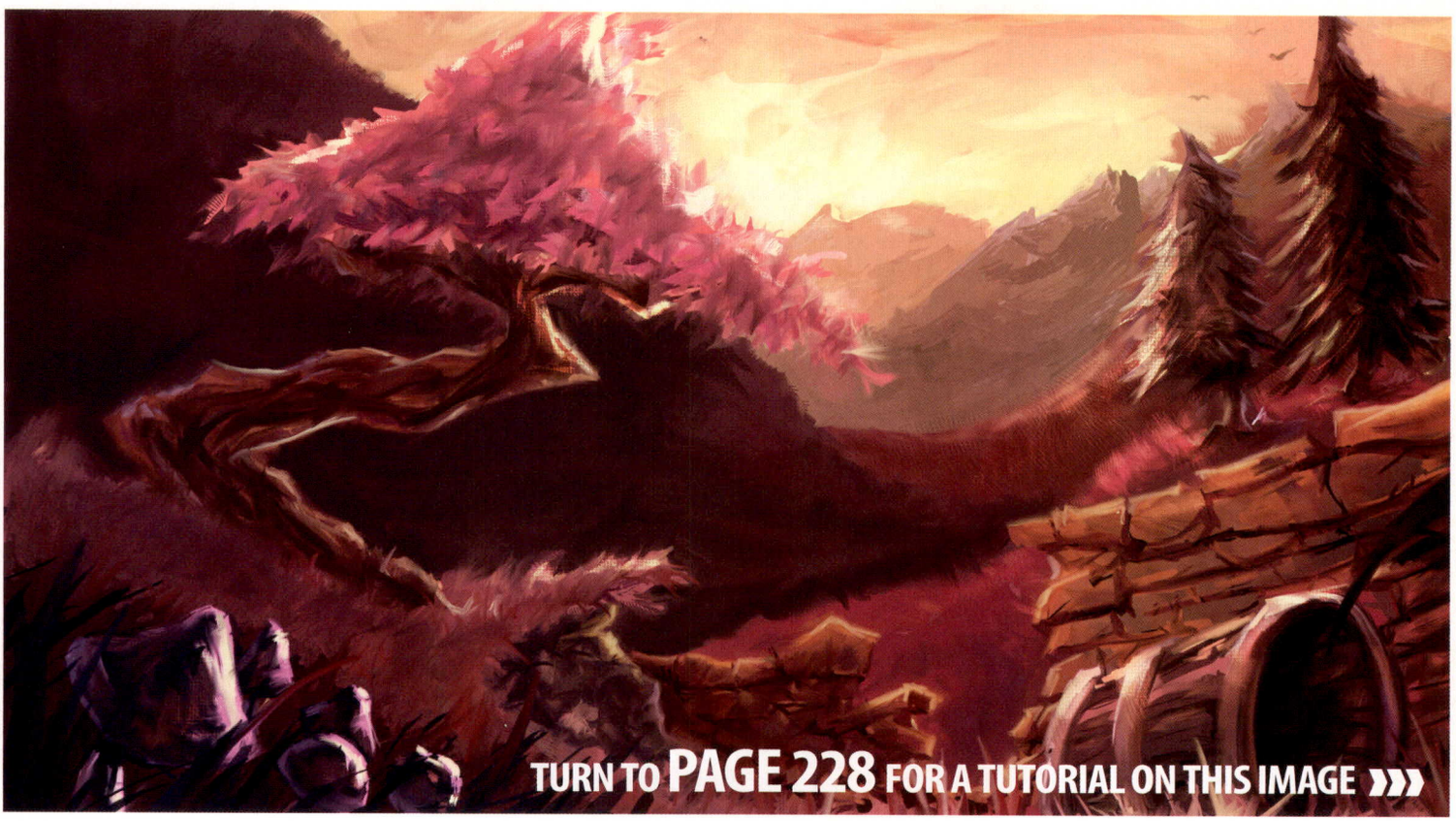
Photoshop has always been used by digital painters to create stunning works of art, though it has often been considered inferior to dedicated painting programs, which have much more tangible paint textures and realistic brush engines.

Adobe is hoping to even the score with CS5, with some of the biggest innovations for digital painters to date. For the more advanced, the new Mixer Brush tool, which enables you to pick up multiple colours and blend them together, and the ability to really change the setup of your brushes, including bristle spacing and direction, will give a realistic and natural-media finish. For beginners, the ability to essentially 'clone' a photo into a painting will be a real bonus.

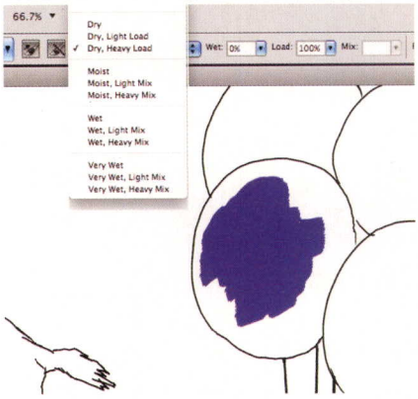
Over the next 12 pages, we'll be looking in detail at the new painting functions, as well as presenting you with two expert tutorials on using the new tools for a portrait and a landscape.

LEARN HOW TO:

- Paint non-destructively
- Master the Mixer Brush tool
- Turn a photo into a painting
- Explore the HUD Color Picker
- Blend colours with your canvas
- Customise the Bristle Tips brushes
- Get more from your graphics tablet



TURN TO PAGE 228 FOR A TUTORIAL ON THIS IMAGE »»»



CUSTOM OPTIONS: With the Mixer Brush, there are various options that can be altered to get it working exactly as you want. First, there are presets, shown here, which have various Wet, Mix, Load and Flow properties. These can also be custom controlled

> The advantage of the Bristle Tips is that they offer more naturally textured paint strokes. This is especially useful when being used with a graphics tablet

Photoshop's brush engine has remained much the same since version 6, so we're really pleased to see that there have been some significant overhauls for CS5, promising to change the way that you work. As well as the innovative Mixer Brush tool and Bristle Tip brushes, there are also a number of smaller tweaks to the functionality of the painting tools, which combine to make a big difference to the way that you work. We'll have a look at them in more detail here.

Bristle Tips

The Brush tool, like all of the painting tools, has been enhanced with the inclusion of the new Bristle Tips, which are custom brush tips that can be adjusted much more naturally than ever before. You can use the controls in the Brushes panel to change the shape, length, stiffness, thickness, angle and spacing, with the changes shown in the new Bristle Brush Preview (toggled on and off in the Brushes panel). Any changes that you make to a Bristle Tip can be saved, so that you can start to build up your own unique collection of custom tips.

The advantage of the Bristle Tips is that they offer more naturally textured paint strokes. This is especially useful when being used with a graphics tablet, as they can respond to the pressure and tilt of your stylus for a more fluid painting action and better blending. The bristles move and bend as you paint, just like a real paintbrush would.

Mixer Brush tool

As well as the Bristle Tips, there is a whole new tool called the Mixer Brush tool, which is selected from the same option set as the Brush tool. With this brush selected, you can combine multiple colours on one tip, as you would in real life. Colours can be mixed and blended with colours on your canvas. For even more realism, the Mixer Brush has a host of controls over paint wetness, the load rate for paint, the rate at which paint mixes and whether a brush is cleaned, refilled or both after every stroke (see 'Tool options' below).

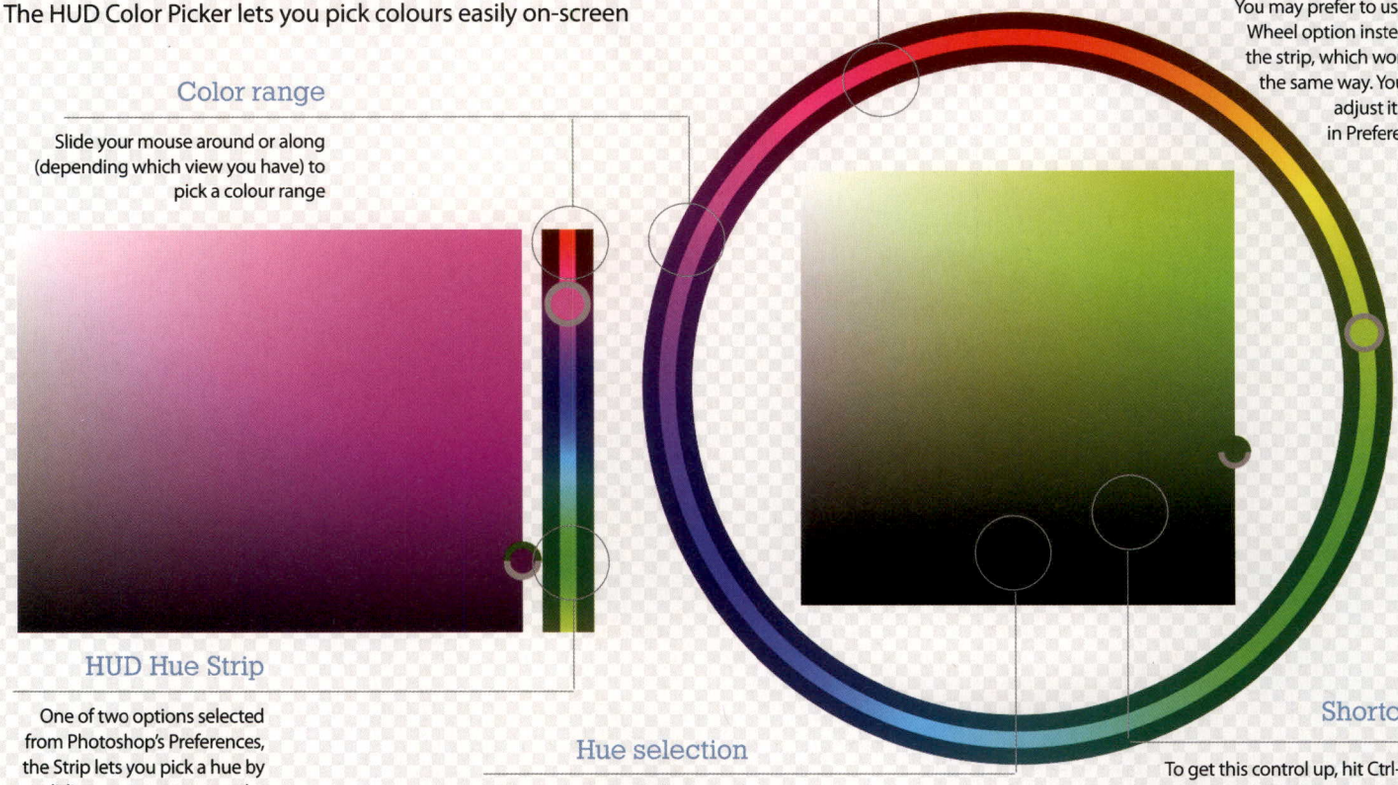
A great feature of this tool is the ability to turn a photo into a realistic painting with ease. A dry (ie, with no paint loaded) Mixer Brush can be used on a new layer above a photo, with Sample All Layers selected, cloning the colours of the photo with every stroke. It's easy to build up a painting just by following the lines of your original photo. The Mixer Brush tool can be used with the static tips (the standard ones) or the new Bristle Tips.

Tool options

There are various new additions in the tool Options bar when using the Brush tools. The first is a coloured square, which shows the current

Color Picker options

The HUD Color Picker lets you pick colours easily on-screen



brush load; you can clean your brush off and this will show as transparent, meaning the dry brush can be used as a blender (for cloning photos, for example).

Next, there are some brush combination options – presets that will help you get started – which are based on combinations of the next bunch of options: Wet, Load, Mix and Flow. Wet controls how liquid the paint on the canvas is, Load is how much paint is put on the brush, Mix controls how the paint on the brush and the canvas interact and finally, Flow is how fast the paint comes off the brush.

Added functionality

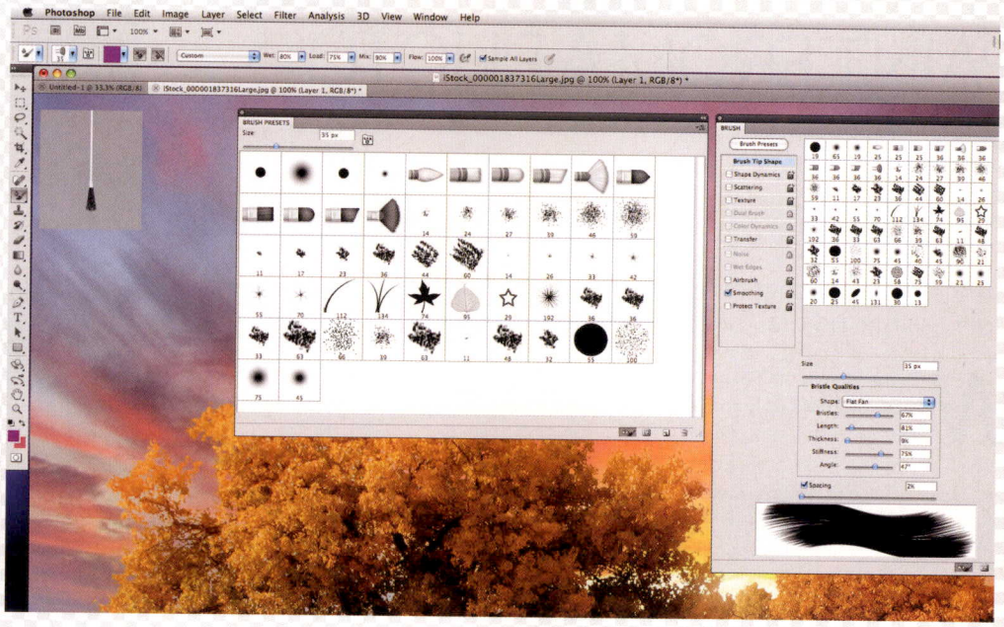
There are a couple of other tweaks for digital painters that are hidden away, but no less innovative. The new HUD Color Picker (found via Ctrl+Opt+Cmd (Mac) or Alt+Shift+right-click (PC)) can be used for more flexibility when selecting colours. It has Hue Strip and Hue Wheel options, and its size can be set in Photoshop's Preferences. For colour control, there is also a new Sample Ring (Opt/Alt), which shows you the colour you have and the colour you are choosing before applying the new colour. This is activated/deactivated via the Eyedropper tool in the Options bar.

Another simple change is that the Tablet Pressure controls are available directly on the tool Options bar with any painting tool, rather than hidden away in the Brushes panel.

What all this amounts to is a complete overhaul of Photoshop's painting abilities. Turn the page to start on the first of two back-to-back tutorials, focusing on the new tools and functions in CS5.

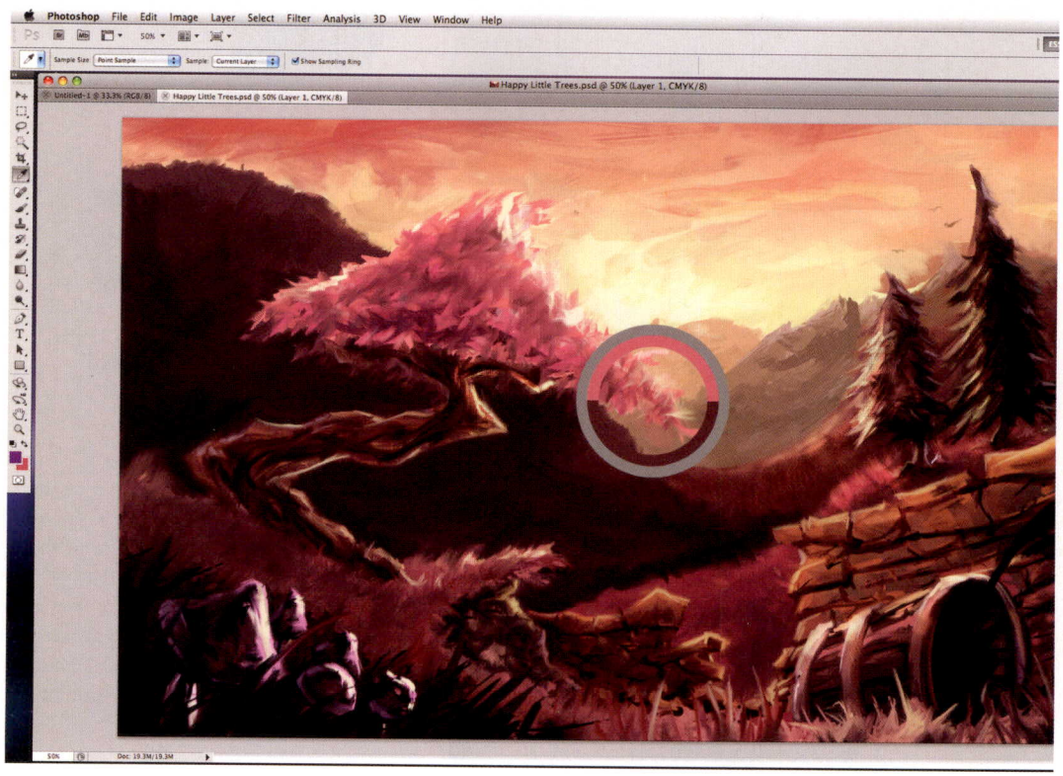
Using the Bristle Tips

The new Tips can be used with the standard Brush tool or the Mixer Brush tool



The new Bristle Tips are instantly recognisable from their thumbnails in the Brush Presets or Brushes panels in that you can see their tips rather than the shape of the brush.

When you select any of these Bristle Tips, you will find new options in the Brushes panel under the Bristle Qualities header. Here you can use the sliders to control the Bristle Tips' Length, Thickness, Stiffness and Angle, as well as the Spacing. A 2D representation of your changes appears in the window below these options, but if you toggle on the Bristle Brush Preview, then you can see your changes in three dimensions. You can drag the brush in the preview window to see it from all angles and, as you paint, the preview changes dynamically. This all adds up to a much more natural painting experience and infinite customisation.

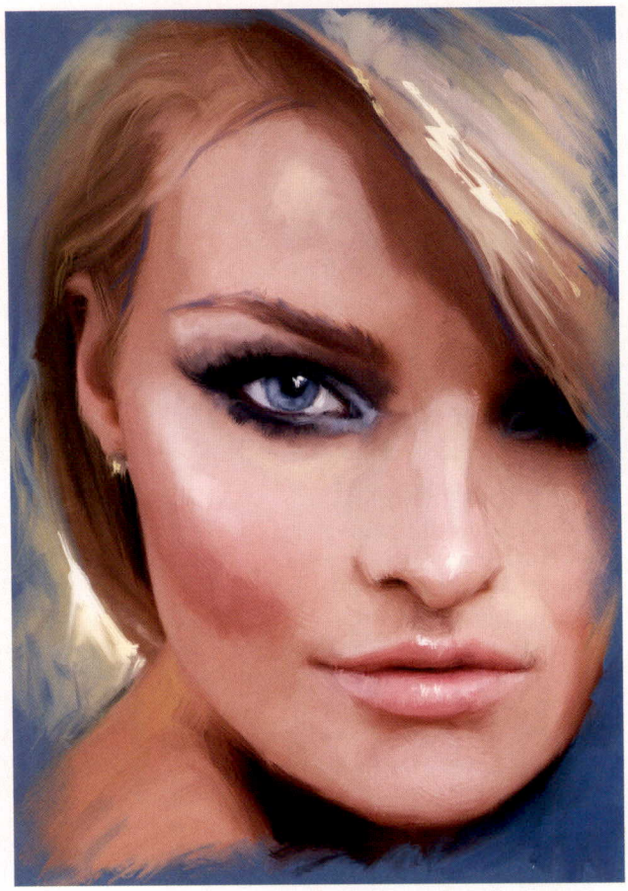


SAMPLE RING: Used with the Eyedropper tool, the Sample Ring pops up to show you your current colour and your newly selected colour so that they can be compared before applying. Activate it in the tool Options bar, then to show the ring, hit Opt/Alt and click on-screen

> The Tablet Pressure controls are available directly on the tool Options bar with any painting tool, rather than hidden away in the Brushes panel

Feature

PAINT FROM A PHOTO IN CS5



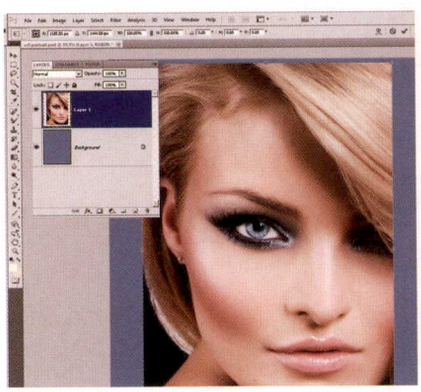
Use the Mixer Brush tool together with the Bristle Tips to create super-realistic natural media paintings in Photoshop

With the advent of CS5, painting in Photoshop has truly come of age. Here, we'll look at the power of CS5's new painting tools to create beautiful, convincing portraits. We're going to look at using the new Mixer Brush tool in conjunction with Photoshop's Bristle Tips. The Mixer Brush allows us to work with colour that blends and mixes together in a completely convincing way. The Bristle Tips allow us to apply that colour with brushes made up from separate bristles, which respond exactly as real-life brushes do.

Apart from the fact that these new tools work amazingly well, one of the greatest advantages, as you'll see here, is that we can use them to 'clone' a painting directly from a photo by setting the Mixer Brush tool so that it picks up the colours from the underlying photograph. This means that, even if you can't paint, you can use the brushes to create superb natural media paintings. Of course, you can't rely on Photoshop doing all of the work, so after establishing an underpainting from the photograph, we'll use the Mixer Brush tool to apply some paint in the 'traditional' manual way.

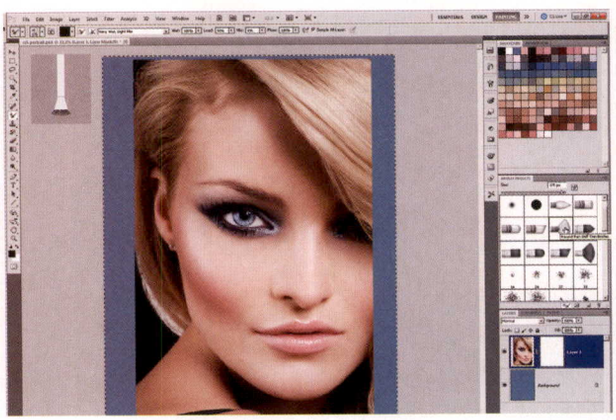
01 Canvas and reference

Start by duplicating the Background layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J). Return to the Background layer and fill this with a mid-toned soft, grey-blue. Return to the duplicate layer and use Edit>Transform>Scale to reduce the size of the image a little, creating space around its edges.



02 Layer mask

As well as using the Mixer Brush on layers, you can also use it on layer masks, so add a layer mask now via Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All. Click directly on the layer mask and ensure that your Foreground Color is Black. Choose the Mixer Brush and from the Brush Presets choose the Round Fan, Stiff, Thin Bristles brush.

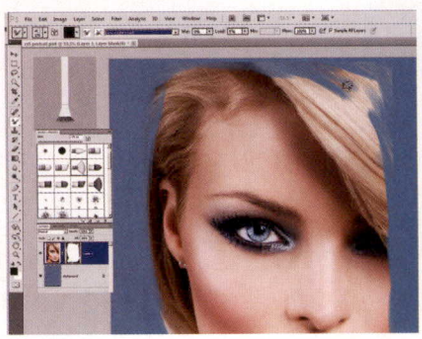


Our expert

Tim Shelbourne
www.timshelbourne.net

Trained as a traditional artist, Tim Shelbourne made the switch to digital many years ago and now specialises in both Photoshop and Painter. Tim is also a regular contributor to Photoshop Creative.

> "We can 'clone' a painting directly from a photo by setting the Mixer Brush tool so that it picks up the colours from the underlying photograph"

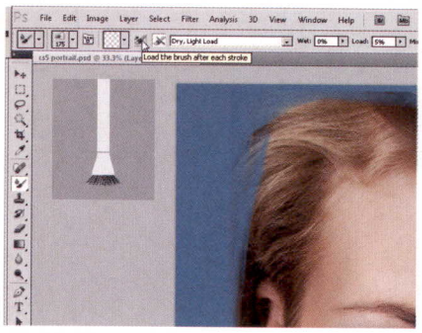


03 Paint onto the mask

From the Options bar at the top of the interface, choose the Dry, Light Load Mixer Brush preset from the drop-down options. Use this brush with black at a fairly large size to brush loosely around the outer edges of the image, making sure that you are painting on the layer mask, hiding the hard edges and giving it a rough, painted outline. Now add a new layer at the top of the layers stack, making sure that Sample All Layers is checked in the Options bar.

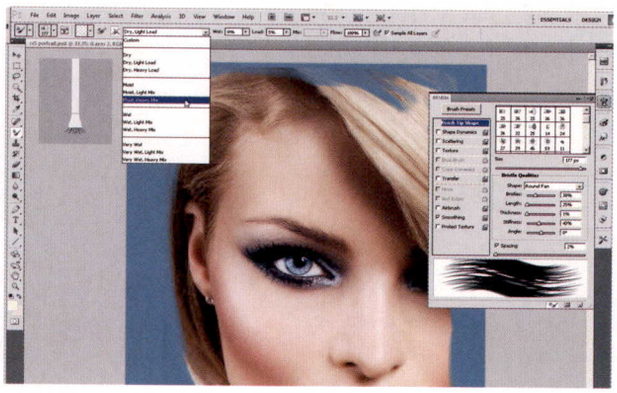
04 Cloning mode

Now for some actual painting. We need to clone first, rather than apply new colour, so in the Options bar, next to the Current Brush Load swatch, deactivate the 'Load brush after each stroke' button. You'll see now that the swatch appears transparent, indicating that no colour is loaded on the brush. Add a new layer.



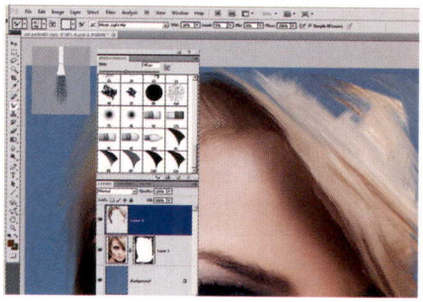
05 Broad, gestural strokes

Display the Brush panel (F5). In Bristle Qualities, reduce Bristles to around 30%. Increase Length a little and reduce Stiffness to around 40%. This will make a nice, rough, flexible brush. In the Options bar, choose the Moist, Heavy Mix preset. Now start to paint roughly over the hair, using relaxed strokes that follow the direction of the hair.



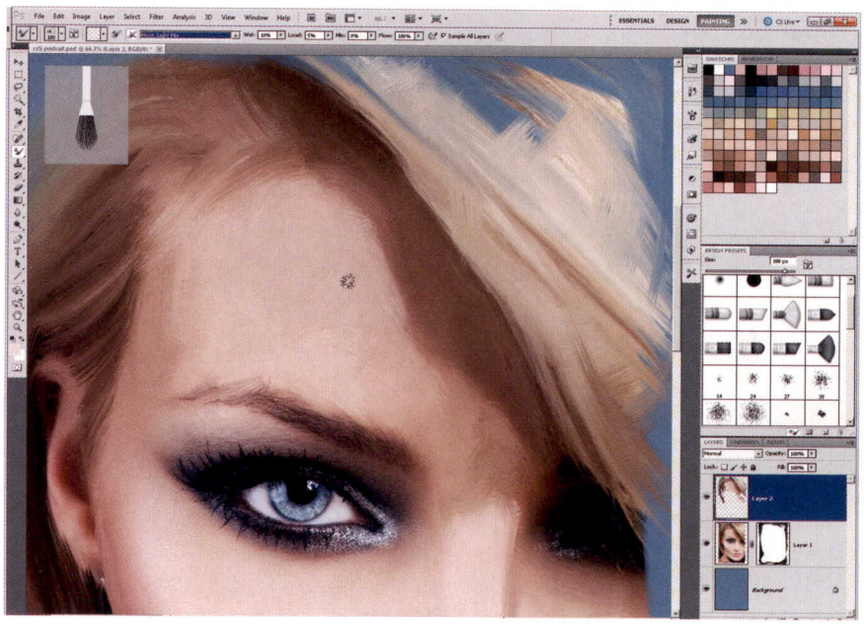
06 Brush angle

These brushes are very expressive and very sensitive to pressure. They're also very dependent on the angle of your stylus, so at this stage, try to work with your brush in a vertical position, guided by the Bristle Brush Preview. Towards the outer edges of the image, change the Mixer Brush preset to a Moist, Heavy Mix for a softer, more blended look.



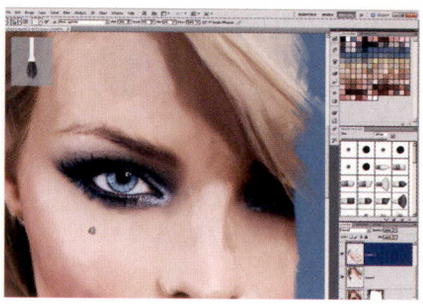
07 Follow the contours

Once the hair is blocked in, it's time to concentrate on the broader areas of the face. Using the Moist, Light Mix preset, start to stroke over the forehead. It's really important that you follow the contours here with your strokes, to build the illusion of form.



08 Contrasting strokes

Because we've reduced the stiffness of this brush, when you apply a small amount of pressure, your strokes will appear soft and bristly, which is good for careful blending, while applying lots of pressure will flex the bristles and create more expressive, painterly areas of colour.

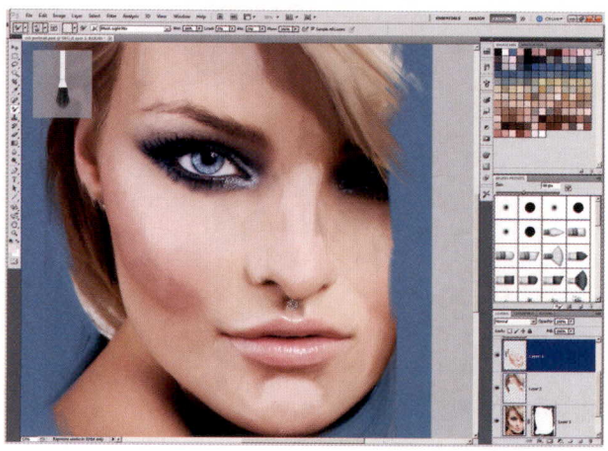


Artist's tip

If you set up a Bristle Tip that you really like, save it as a Mixer Brush tool preset rather than a Brush preset. Click the Tool Preset button in the top left of the Options bar and choose the New Tool preset. This will not only save the brush with its bristle settings, but will also save the current Mixer Brush settings along with it!

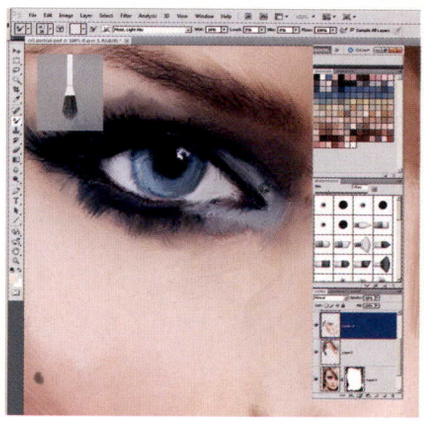
09 Face painting

Continue to paint over the broad facial areas, leaving the mouth and eyes untouched for the time being. Reduce the size of your brush around areas of fine detail, such as the base of the nose and above the upper lip so that the paint isn't applied too heavy-handedly. Remember that you are almost 'sculpting' with paint here, so make the tool work for you.



10 Moving colour

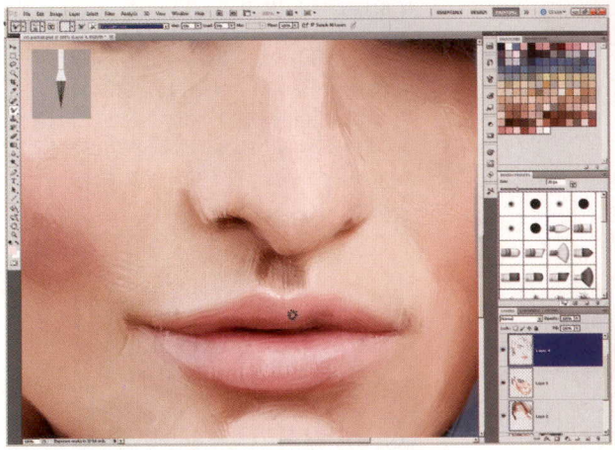
Use a round brush with a low bristle count to 'paint' over the eyes, using the brush at quite a small size. Once again, reducing the Bristles amount in Bristle Qualities will make the effect more evident within your strokes. It's important to remember here that we're simply moving existing colour around to create a painterly effect.



> Any of the Dry group of Mixer Brush presets will result in sharper, more defined strokes, so these are good for rendering areas such as the lips, where transitions between tones are more abrupt

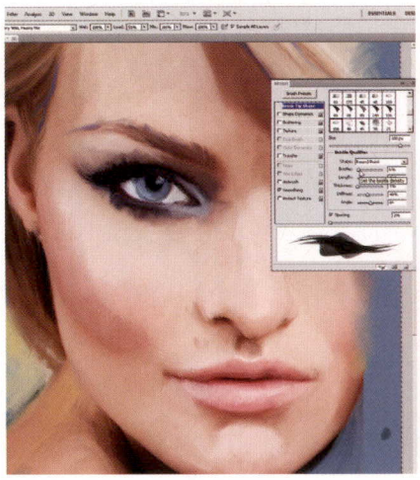
12 Mixer Brush presets

Any of the Dry group of Mixer Brush presets will result in sharper, more defined strokes, so these are good for rendering areas such as the lips, where transitions between tones are much more abrupt. Remember, you can really push paint around and shape it when using the Mixer Brush tool.



15 Bristle adjustments

Add a new layer, as this is always a good safeguard when adding more detail to a painting in progress. Ensure that Sample All Layers is still checked in the Options bar for the Mixer Brush tool. Choose the Round Point, Stiff brush. In the Brush Panel (F5), set Bristles to 6%, Length 95%, Thickness 1% and Stiffness 40%.

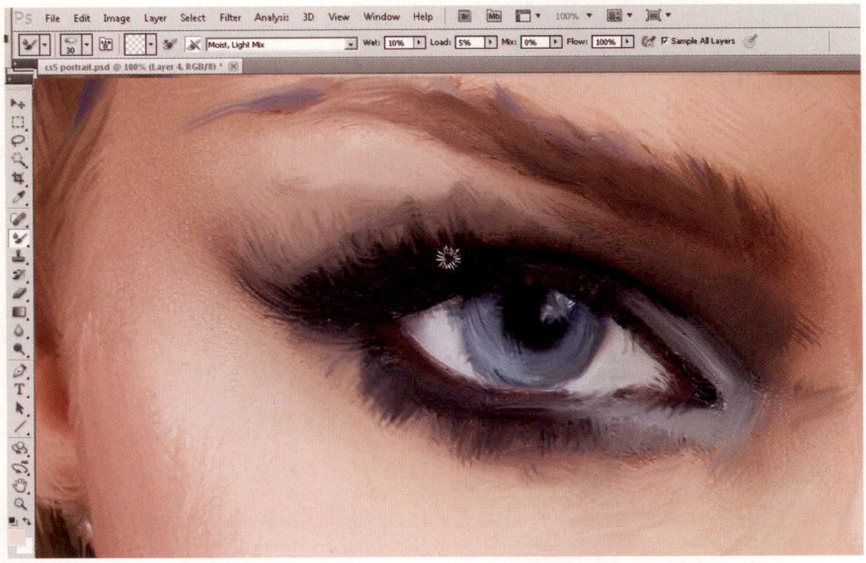


Artist's tip

When you're not used to it, the Mixer Brush tool can be unpredictable, so it's vital to use layers as you paint. This allows you to work non-destructively, painting directly on a separate layer, and delete if things go wrong. Make sure to have the Sample All Layers box checked when you paint onto layers.

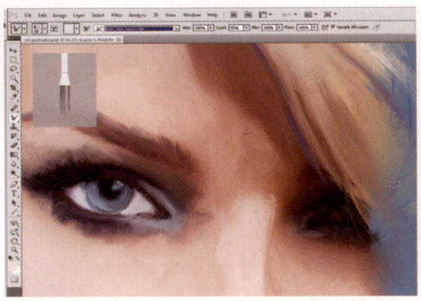
11 Expressive strokes

One of the most vital aspects here is expressive brush strokes. As you work, make sure to follow the major contours and shapes. The eyelashes and eyebrows are good examples of this. For these, reduce the amount of bristles in the brush and use short, flicking motions that follow the direction of growth.



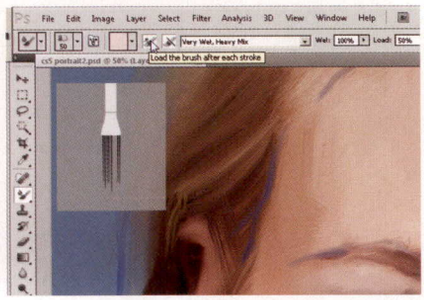
13 Heavy blending

With a larger brush (still from Bristle Tips brushes), use the Very Wet, Heavy Mix preset around the outer edges of the image to create heavily blended areas. Use your stylus at quite an acute angle to your tablet, with lots of pressure so you create really loose, expressive strokes here.



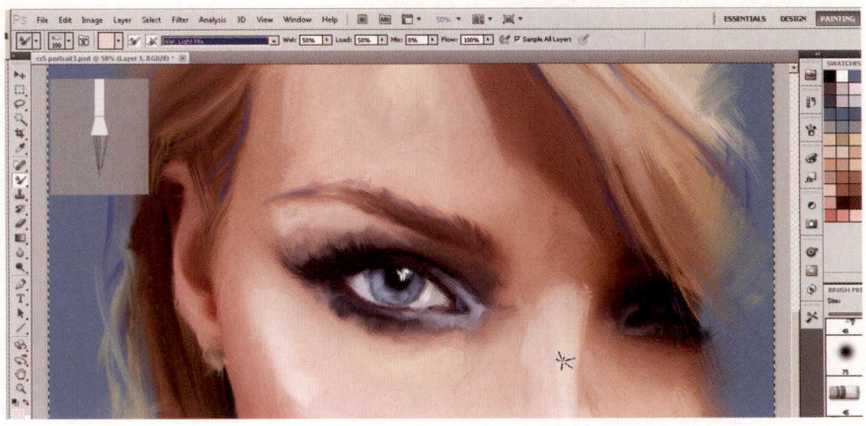
14 Painting with colour

Once this cloned painting is complete, it's time to start adding some painted colour, so now activate the 'Load brush after each stroke' button. This means that the brush will now paint with your chosen colours, rather than just picking up underlying colour. Flatten the image to start.



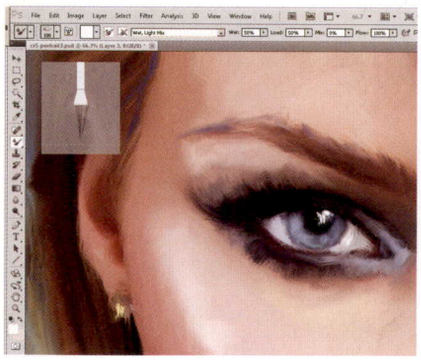
16 Adding highlights

Choose the Wet, Light Mix preset. Now, use this brush in a vertical position to add some highlights to the face. To choose your highlight colour, click in the colour swatch, click outside the colour picker on one of the palest skin tones and then choose a lighter shade from within the colour picker.



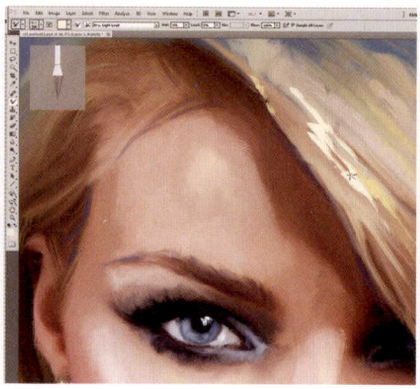
17 A painterly approach

With this brush, the harder you press, the more the bristles will splay out on the canvas. This is great for both adding fine highlights with a little pressure, and softer, broader areas of highlight by pressing harder with the brush. Make sure to add some highlights to the eyes.



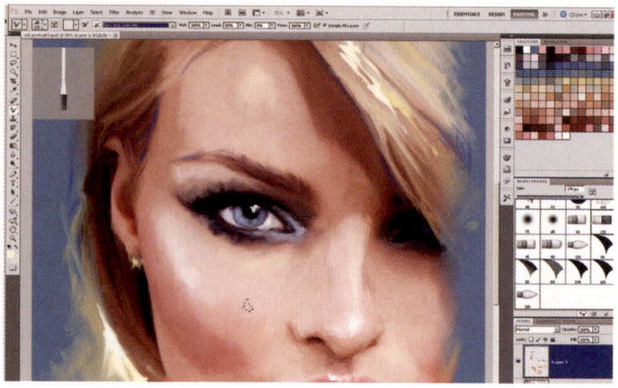
18 Harder highlights

Choose the Dry, Light Load preset. Choosing suitable colour, add some rough, sharp highlight streaks to the hair, and a few hard, bright highlights to the eyes and the lips. Use the finished painting as a reference here.



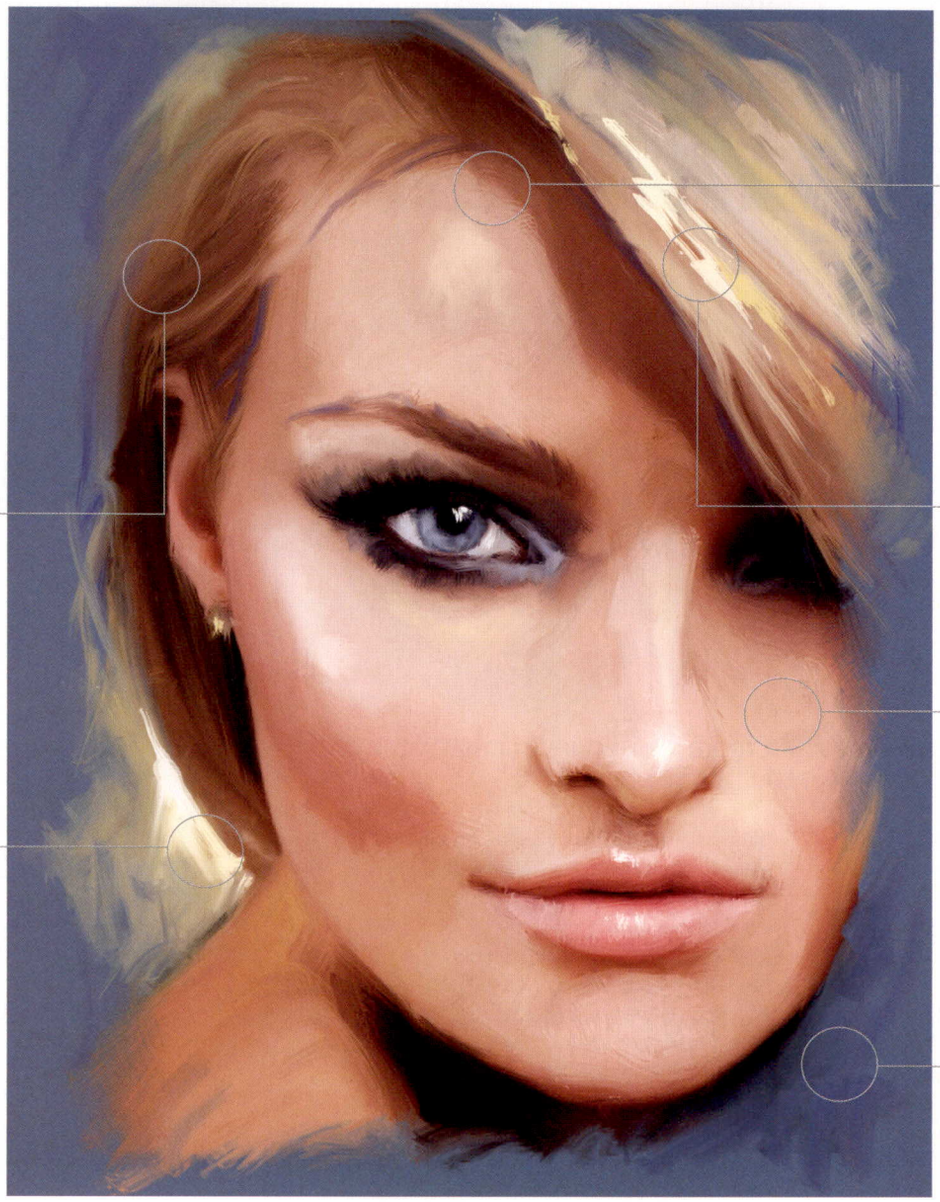
19 Simple blending

Choose one of the flat-head Bristle brushes and deactivate the 'Load brush after each stroke' button. Select one of the Very Wet presets and use this brush to carefully blend and smudge any areas of the painting that look too stark. This simple blender allows you to carefully polish the textures in the finished painting.



Getting your brush settings right

To create a successful painting, you need contrasting areas of texture and strokes. The Bristle and Mixer Brush settings can make all the difference



Stiffness

Short Length and moderately high Stiffness options result in strokes in which the bristly nature of the brush is very evident. Make sure to reduce Bristles amount

Simple blending

If you need to blend areas, deactivate the 'Load brush after each stroke' button in the Options bar so you're only blending existing colours

Hard highlights

A round, pointed Bristle Tips brush, using one of the Dry Mixer modes, creates hard-edged strokes, with virtually no blending in existing paint

Softly, softly

The fan-shaped Bristle brushes are great for soft, bristly strokes. Make sure to reduce the Bristles amount and brush with a soft motion

Be flexible

Reduce the Stiffness, increase the Length and reduce the Bristles amount for a really flexible brush to create super painterly strokes

Extreme blending

Using any of the Bristle Tip brushes with the Very Wet, High Mix presets creates strokes with an extremely high blending factor

PAINT FROM SCRATCH IN CS5

Painting in Photoshop becomes a lot more realistic and natural with CS5's new Mixer Brush tool and Bristle Tips brushes

Our expert

David and Sarah Cousens (aka Cool Surface)
www.coolsurface.com

David and Sarah have worked for the BBC, Adidas, Macmillan Publishing and, when they're not writing tutorials, are illustrating a series of books for Hachette Publishing.

No matter how much you love Photoshop, and how many cool custom brushes you have, you'll probably have been a little jealous of Corel Painter's realistic brushes if you are into digital painting.

We've just been taking a look at how the new features can be used to clone a portrait photo with ease and how the revamped brush engine has brushes that now perform like… well, actual brushes! However, if you want to use Photoshop to paint more traditionally from scratch, then there is far more scope for variation with Bristle Tips brushes than Photoshop's old static brushes. And when combined with your graphics tablet, you will feel just like you are playing with real paints on a real canvas.

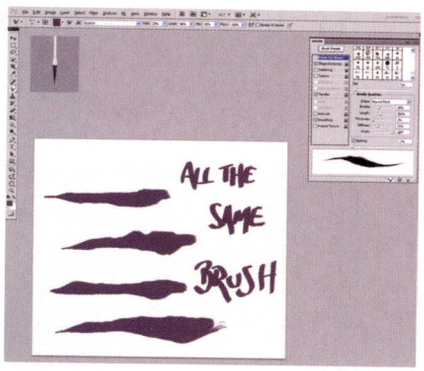
When the Mixer Brush tool is used hand in hand with the Bristle Tips brushes – it really takes Photoshop to the next level; essentially, you've got all the fun of real-life painting, with all the editing options of Photoshop.

Over the next few pages, we're going to look in detail at the new digital painting features to build up a colourful landscape image, so grab your graphics tablet and start experimenting.

> If you want to use Photoshop to paint more traditionally, then there is far more scope for variation with Bristle Tips brushes than Photoshop's old static brushes

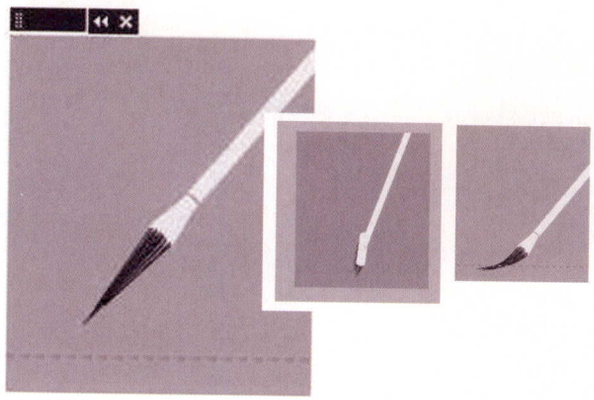
01 Different strokes

Before we get started, we need to go over some of the new changes to the brushes' behaviour. Unlike the old static brushes, the Stroke Preview in the Brush palette isn't an exact representation of the stroke you make; it's a representation of what could potentially happen depending on your movements.



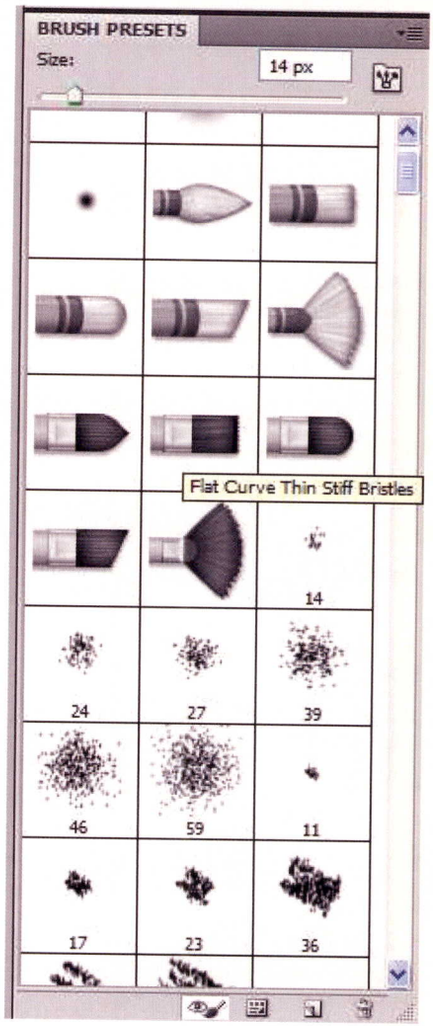
02 Time for your tablets

To get the most out of these brushes, a tilt sensitive graphics tablet is essential. As well as the Brush Preview box showing you what your brush is doing, you'll notice your cursor alters to show which part of the brush you're painting with! Hold your stylus vertically to paint with the tip or tilt it for any other angle.



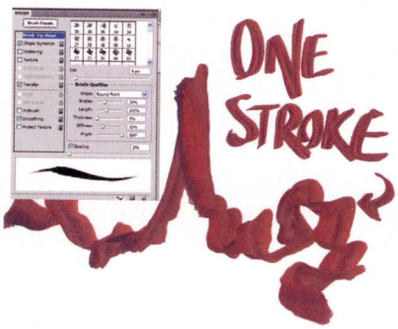
03 Dark and light

The new brushes are divided into flat and round brush head tips (represented in the Brush Presets palette by dark and light brush tip icons respectively) and consist of Pointed, Blunt, Curved, Angled and Fan shapes. Much like real brushes, the round brushes are better for covering large areas and flat brushes work well for detail.



04 Options galore!

The Mixer Brush has every Bristle Tips brush option plus more! There are buttons to both clean and load the brush after every stroke. Holding Opt/Alt will act differently than the traditional Eyedropper tool, as it picks up every colour under the cursor, giving mixed paint. There is a drop-down menu to pick solid colours only if you prefer the traditional method.



05 Mix Modes

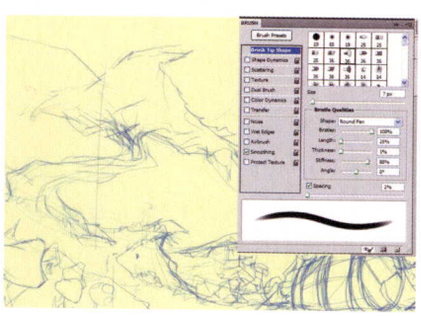
The differences in the Mix Mode drop-down menu are conveniently arranged from Dry to Very Wet. Dry paint barely picks up any paint from the canvas at all, while Very Wet paint takes a lot of it. Similarly, Light Mix mixes the canvas and brush paint mildly in contrast to Heavy Mix, which blends the paints quite drastically.

Artist's tip

To get the most out of your Bristle Tips brushes, be sure to click Toggle the Bristle Brush in the Brush Presets palette, which will bring up a preview box that displays the exact angle that your brush is tilting, so you can see the position and shape of your brush.

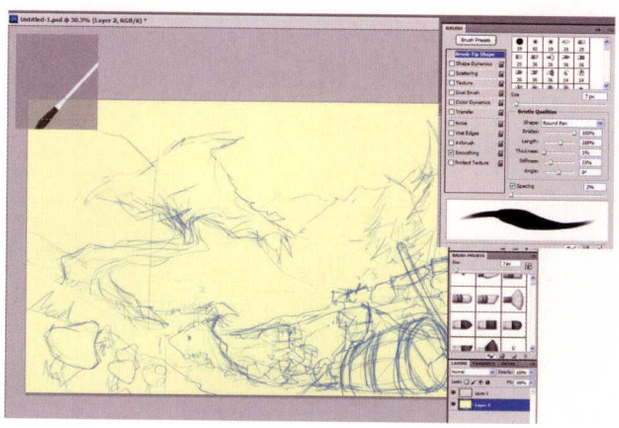
06 Let's go to work!

Select the Painting workspace in the top right of Photoshop to get the most useful layout, then create or load the sketch you want to work from (there's plenty of linework on the web that you can use to practise with). Select the Round Fan Bristle brush from the Brush Presets palette.



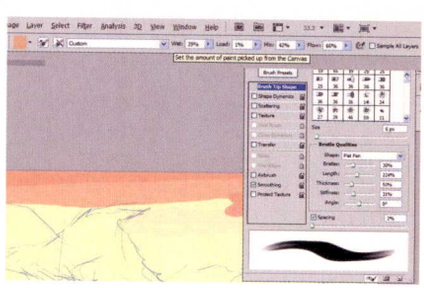
07 Brushing up

Open the Brush palette to play with the Tip settings. Drag the sliders to extend the Length of the bristles to 285% and lower Stiffness to 23%. Lowering the Stiffness gives all of the brushes more potential to splay out when you apply pressure, making your strokes much more expressive.



08 A little painting on the side

Start painting on the Background layer. Use the Brush Preview as a guide to tilt your brush so that you're painting with its side to colour the sky more quickly. Select the Mixer Brush and choose a Flat Fan with Bristles at 30%, Length 224%, Thickness 50% and Stiffness 31% to start detailing the mountains.



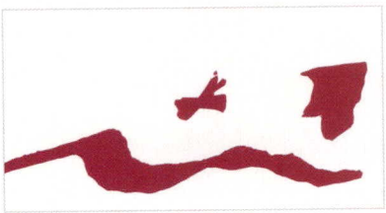
Key brushes used

Round Point

Key settings: Bristles 81%, Length 163%, Thickness 1%, Stiffness 1%, Angle 0%, Spacing 2%

Flat Point

Key settings: Bristles 24%, Length 485%, Thickness 1%, Stiffness 33%, Angle 168%, Spacing 2%

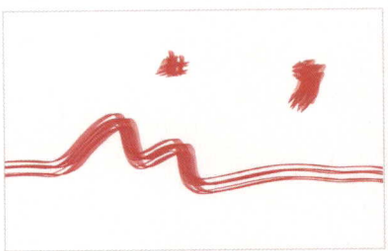


Round Fan

Key settings: Bristles 39%, Length 285%, Thickness 1%, Stiffness 32%, Angle 0%, Spacing 30%

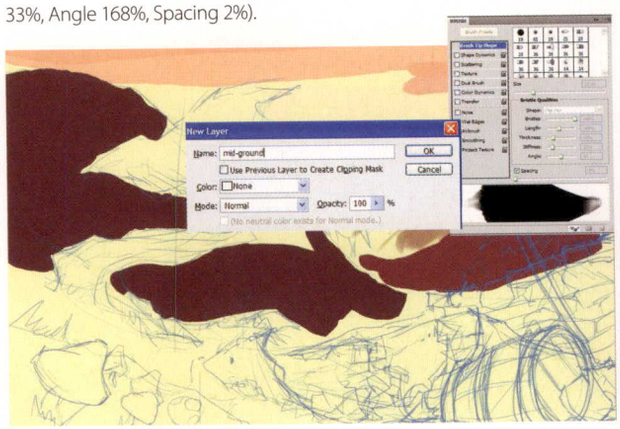
Round Angle

Key settings: Bristles 7%, Length 40%, Thickness 1%, Stiffness 33%, Angle 0%, Spacing 3%



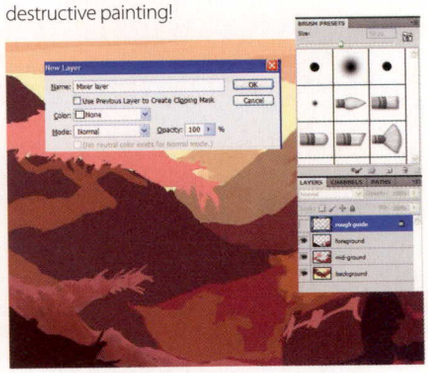
09 Saturation point

Switch to the Flat Fan Bristle brush with Length 240% and Stiffness 22% and flat colour the remaining sections of hills, remembering to make the colours more saturated the closer they are to the foreground. Create a new layer called 'Mid-ground' to paint the trees and grass bank with the Flat Point brush (Bristles 24%, Length 485%, Thickness 1%, Stiffness 33%, Angle 168%, Spacing 2%).



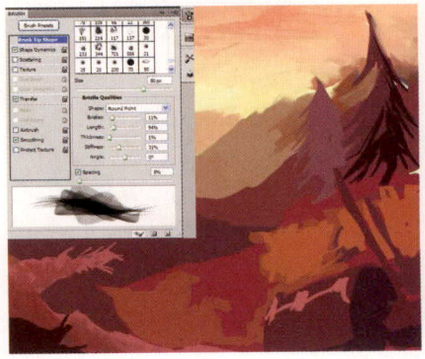
10 Non-destructive painting!

Create a foreground layer to paint in the wall, barrel and mushrooms. Hide the guide layer so that the lines won't get picked up by the Mixer Brush. Create a new layer above everything called 'Mixer Layer'. When you tick the Sample All Layers box, you can blend every colour on the image without affecting the layers below – true non-destructive painting!



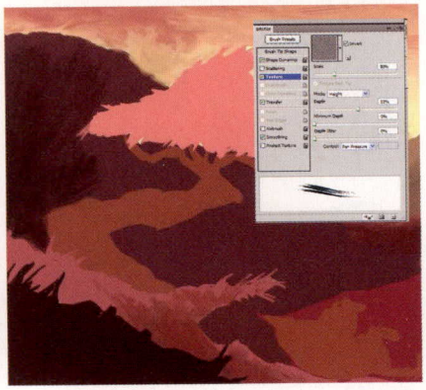
11 Shepherd's delight

Paint the sky with the Round Point Mixer brush with settings; Bristles 11%, Length 94%, Thickness 1%, Stiffness 31% and Spacing 8%. Also, go to the Transfer jitters (in the Brushes palette) and set Flow, Wetness and Mix to Pen Pressure and select Moist, Light Mix from the Mixing Mode drop-down menu. Now, start painting with long, broad strokes.



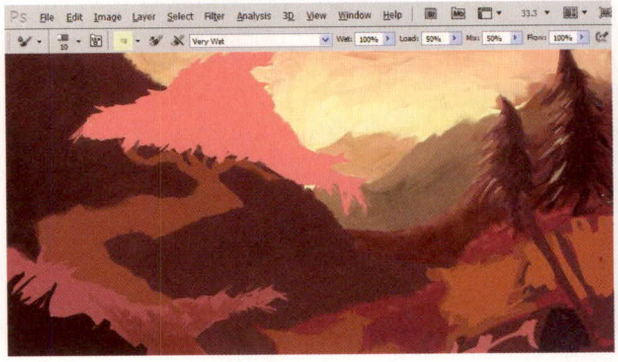
12 Give it a good scratch

To make the scratchier marks on the hills, use the Round Angle brush with the following settings; Bristles 4%, Length 194%, Thickness 1%, Stiffness 31%, Spacing 48%, tick Texture in the Brush palette, select a Canvas texture and set mode to Height and use Very Wet, Heavy Mix from the Mixing Mode drop-down menu.



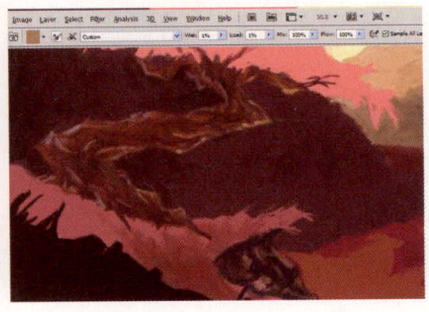
13 Branching out

Add some hard-edged shading on the trees to make them more defined. Use a Very Wet, Flat Blunt brush with the following settings; Bristles 63%, Length 33%, Thickness 23%, Stiffness 55% and Spacing 12%. Remember to build up your colours from light to dark on the branches.



14 Brushed aside

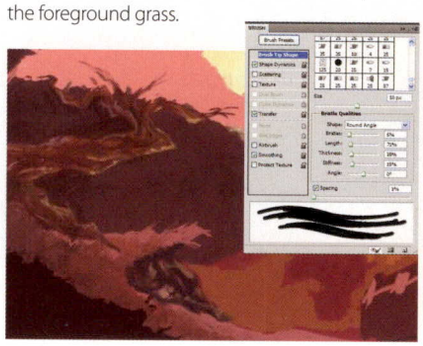
Add details to the tree and mud bank with a Wet, Flat Angle brush (Bristles 11%, Length 416%, Thickness 1%, Stiffness 33%, Spacing 6%), then detail the mountain tops with the Round Angle brush (Bristles 6%, Length 71%, Thickness 28%, Stiffness 15%).



> Detailing the grass requires a Round Angle brush with a low bristle count and short bristles so you see more individual bristles. The higher your bristle count, the smoother your brush stroke

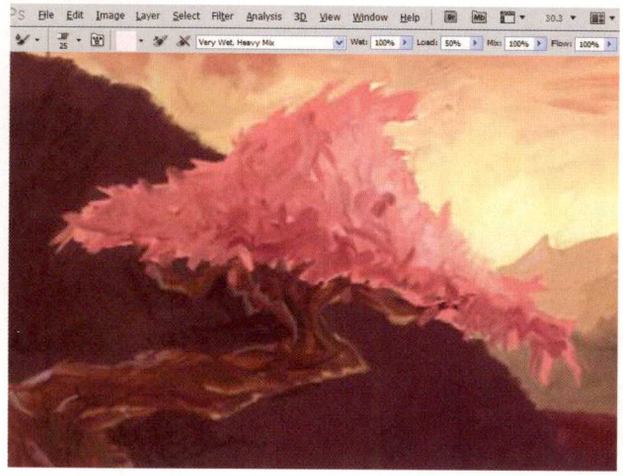
15 The higher, the smoother

Detailing the grass requires a Round Angle brush, again with a low bristle count and short bristles so that you see more individual bristles. The higher your bristle count, the smoother your brush stroke appears. Increase the Length and Bristles a reasonable amount to paint the foreground grass.



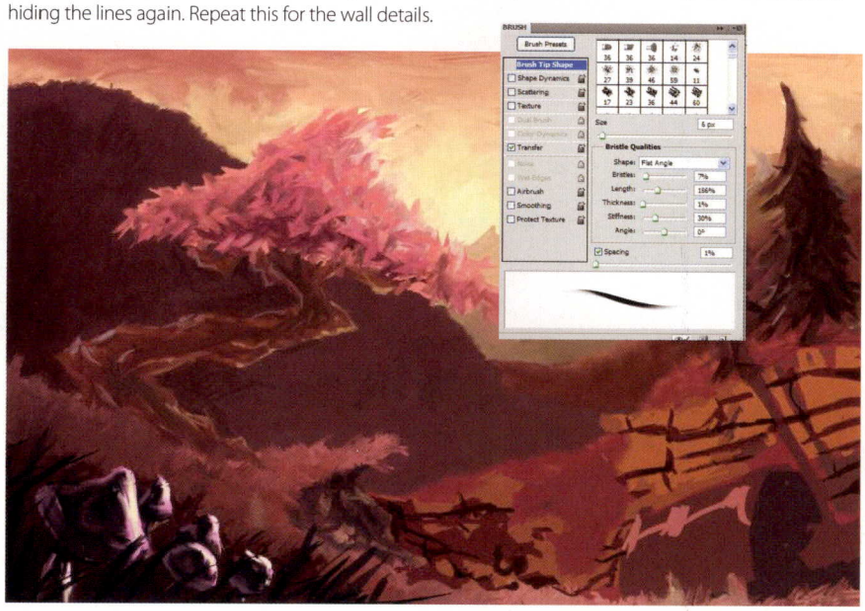
16 A nice pick-me-up

Detail the pink tree's leaves with a Very Wet, Heavy Mix, Flat Angle brush using both light and dark pinks. The use of short, quick strokes picks up the existing colours and gives a nice variation to the leaves. The Wet level determines how much paint is picked up from the canvas; the wetter your brush, the more paint it picks up.



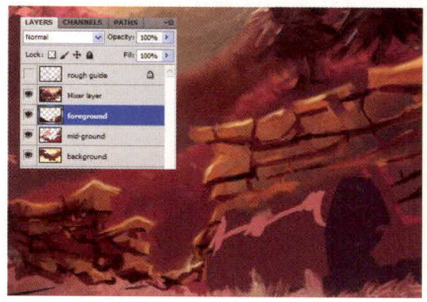
17 It just won't mix

To paint the mushrooms, make the guide layer visible again and use the Flat Angle brush with Wetness set to 0%. This stops the brush from mixing so you colour under the lines without them affecting the colour on your brush. Add the colours you want, then bring the Wet level back up to mix them, after hiding the lines again. Repeat this for the wall details.



18 A single-layered approach

To give the wall more tonal variation without affecting the details, uncheck Sample All Layers and paint on the foreground layer with a long and soft Flat Angle brush. Back on the Mixer layer, reduce the size of this brush to detail all of the trees and the barrel and add some dark grass in the foreground.

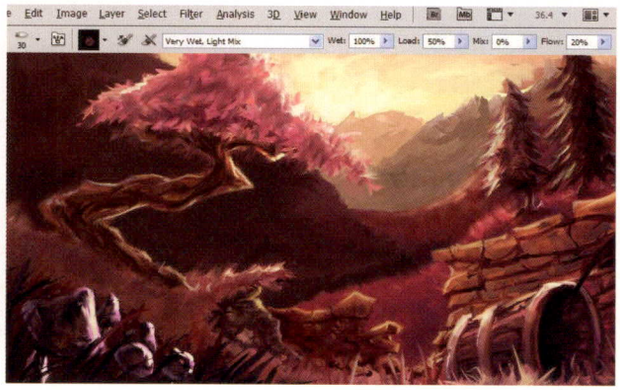


19 This evening's highlights

Add a new layer at the top of the layer stack with the blending mode of the layer set to Overlay, and use this layer to paint in highlights. When rendering the distant grass highlights, reduce both the Length and the number of Bristles so that you can pick out individual highlights for a more realistic look. When painting the barrel highlights, tick Texture in the Brush palette to break up the brush strokes a little.

20 It's all in the details

To finish off, use a Round Point brush (with settings Bristles 11%, Length 94%, Thickness 1%, Stiffness 13%, Spacing 8%) and select Very Wet, Light Mix from the Mix Mode menu to add the small details like the birds, cracks in the wall and grooves on the barrel.



CONTENT-AWARE FILL

Content-Aware Fill is one of the biggest new features of Photoshop CS5; we find out how it works

Our expert

Julie Easton

Julie is the editor of **Advanced Photoshop** and also a regular contributor to photographic magazines. She loves playing with photos in Photoshop, tweaking the tiny details to improve overall impact.

Source files

On the CD you will find the starting image that we used for this tutorial. You'll also need Photoshop CS5. See **www.adobe.com** for availability of trial versions.

> Select the object you want to remove and Photoshop will intelligently fill the area

With Photoshop CS4, Adobe introduced us to the new algorithm Content-Aware Scale, which enabled users to scale photos without distorting or losing any of the key parts of the composition. This time around, Photoshop has provided us with Content-Aware Fill, which is a technology that intelligently 'fills' an area in a photo based on the surrounding background.

Usually, if you want to clone out an offending object from a photograph, you will have to manually use the Clone Stamp tool. This involves telling Photoshop where you want to clone from and, if you're cloning a large area, it can get time-consuming and extremely frustrating to keep sampling for the most realistic result.

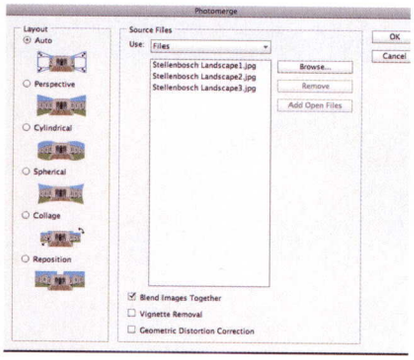
With Content-Aware Fill, however, you can select the object you want to remove, choose the option from the Fill menu and Photoshop will make its best guess as to what would lie behind. It also works as an option on the Spot Healing Brush tool, for those who need an effective solution for retouching photos.

This is not infallible technology and chances are that you will have to do some cloning around the edges to get a perfect result, but it's a fast and reasonably accurate way to remove unwanted objects from the scene.

In this feature, continuing this issue's spotlight on Photoshop CS5, we show you how to use it to fill in around a stitched panoramic scene to demonstrate the power of the technology at filling in content that doesn't exist on a large scale.

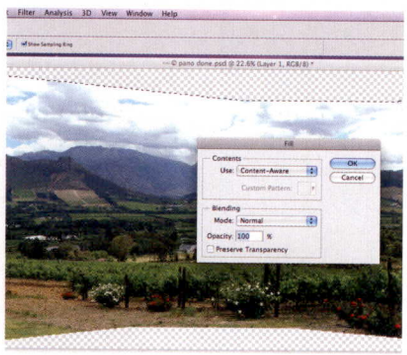
01 Merge your images

Open the images you want to use. We've provided some on the disc ('Stellenbosch Landscape1-3.jpg') for your convenience. Go to File>Automate>Photomerge, select the files and click OK to merge into a panorama.



02 Make a selection

If you don't want to worry about the Photomerge step, just open 'pano done.psd' from the disc to continue. Crop the image a bit so that there is less area to fill, then create a new, merged layer at the top of the stack (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Opt/Alt+E). Use the Magic Wand tool on this layer to select the first transparent area in the background.

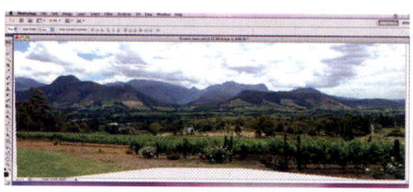


03 Content-Aware Fill

Once you have made the selection, you need to select the Fill command. Do this with the Edit>Fill menu, or use the shortcut Cmd/Ctrl+Backspace to bring up the Fill dialog. There is now a new option in here under Use, from which you can select Content-Aware. Click OK.

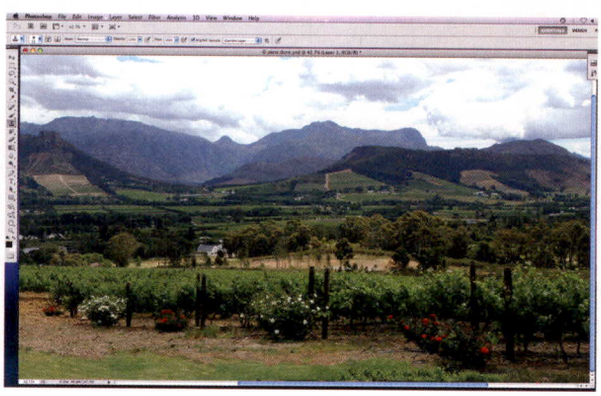
04 And wait...

Photoshop will now analyse the area and work out how to fill the scene with a likely background. It will consider the colour, contrast and lighting of the surrounding areas and approximate how best to fill the selection. This will take a few moments; the bigger the selection, the longer the wait.



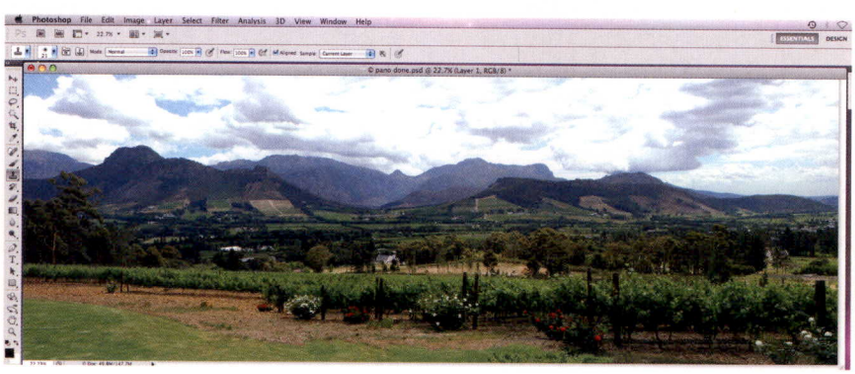
05 Touch it up

Repeat the last two steps on the other transparent areas. This is a pretty good fill, but there are clearly areas that need to be worked on a bit more. Use the Clone Stamp tool in the usual manner, selecting small sample areas to blend in the filled area seamlessly. While we are still having to clone, a lot of the hard work has been done for us, saving time.



06 And we're done

We now have a complete panoramic image, which has expanded into the transparent areas. Try it out on your own images. You can see Content-Aware Fill working live on the video tips on this book's free disc too.

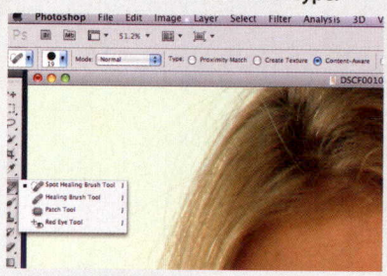


Using the Spot Healing Brush tool

We show you how to retouch a photo using Content-Aware Fill

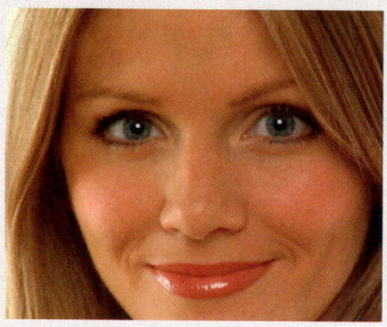
01 Set up the brush

Open the image that you want to edit (we have provided 'DSCF0010.jpg' on the CD to practise on). Select the Spot Healing Brush tool from the side toolbar. In the top Options bar, make sure that Content-Aware is selected under Type.



02 Set your brush size

For the most accurate editing, you need to select the smallest brush size possible for the section that you want to edit. Hover over the blemish and use the bracket keys to size the brush over the area. Make it too large and Content-Aware will be analysing too big an area to approximate what lies underneath, confusing the results.



03 And repeat...

Click the area and Photoshop will fill it with content based on the surrounding pixels. Continue to click over the blemishes, sizing the brush as you go. This method gives a more natural result than the usual Spot Healing brush as the process is tailored to the area, and you'll find you get a less uniform finish.

COMPLEX CUTOUTS

We show you how some of Photoshop CS5's new features can speed up and simplify your selection tasks

According to Adobe, Photoshop CS5 takes the time and frustration out of making precise selections and masks, so in this tutorial, we're putting this claim to the test. The Pen tool is a favourite selection method, but is not always the best option for complex selections, such as hair or leaves. Likewise, the Channels tool can get a reasonably good cutout, but is still not always ideal as it can be tedious to get right. So what does CS5 have to offer?

The Refine Edge tool, which is found under Select> Refine Edge, has been updated in CS5 and incorporates several editing options all in one place. One great feature for editing selection edges is Shift Edge. An old tool made better, Shift Edge allows you to trim or extend your selection, getting rid of any unwanted material such as background colour.

In the Refine Edge palette also sits an enhanced set of viewing options, which allows you to view your selection on an even wider choice of backdrops. Yet another new option is the Output feature, which usefully provides a choice of how to save your selection. Using Output, your cleaned-up selection can now be saved onto a new layer or document leaving the original photo untouched.

The Refine Radius and Erase Refinements tools, also located in the Refine Edge palette, are meant to be the best options for tricky selections. Erase Refinements enables you to tidy up edges; it is fast, very accurate and allows you to add very fine details. The Refine Radius tool expands the cut-out area, allowing you to bring out fine details such as flyaway hairs. These tools are great, but would be even better if they came with a Strength slider as, at the minute, it's a little 'all or nothing' and getting the perfect balance is hard.

The Smart Radius option automatically chooses the best selection method for the task in hand, by analysing the object's edge characteristics and providing the best tool for the job. This is a hard tool to master though, and hours were spent trying to get a very complex image to work as desired. It can work on extremely complicated selections, but the simpler the better. It's most effective on images containing a mixture of edge types. Another new, incredibly easy-to-use tool provided by Adobe is the Decontamination tool, which eliminates unwanted background fringing around the edges of selections. The results are instant – a great addition.

Overall, these new features are an impressive bonus in Photoshop CS5, though can be a little tricky to master. They do aid cutting out complex selections by hand, but the old, faithful Photoshop tricks and tools will still be needed for a completely realistic cutout.

Our expert

Dani Dixon

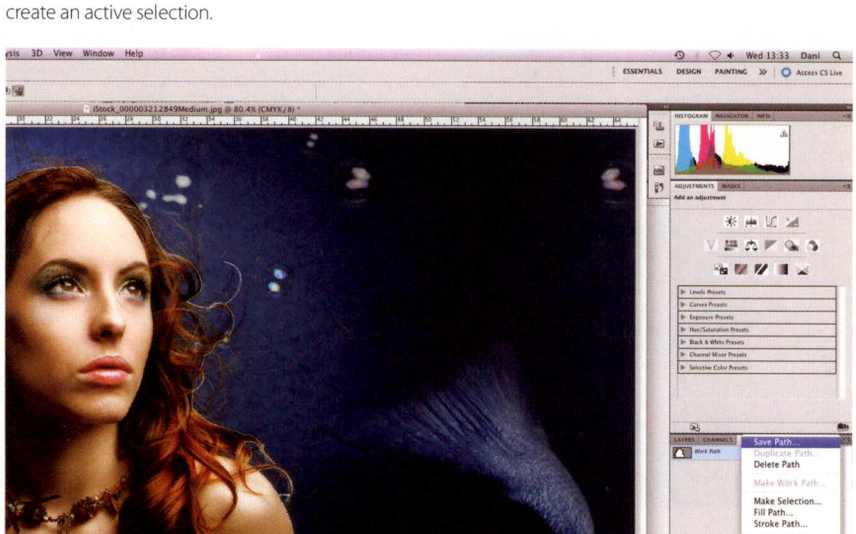
After gaining a degree in Illustration from Swansea University six years ago, Dani has worked in the publishing industry, for titles such as **Advanced Photoshop** and **Photoshop Creative**.

Source files

We used image number '3212849' from iStockphoto.com, but there are free alternative images on the disc.

01 Create a selection

Open up your chosen start image in Photoshop and begin by making a selection around the desired model/object. In this example, the Pen tool was used to create a path and the path was then saved in the Paths palette. To re-access, you have to Cmd/Ctrl-click on the saved path's thumbnail to create an active selection.

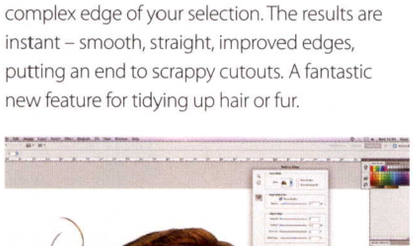


02 Viewing mode

Go to Select>Refine Edge to bring up the new-and-improved palette. Here you will find all of the tools we will be covering in this tutorial. Start off by choosing your viewing mode – there are new options to choose from in CS5. To see the results most effectively, opt for On White.

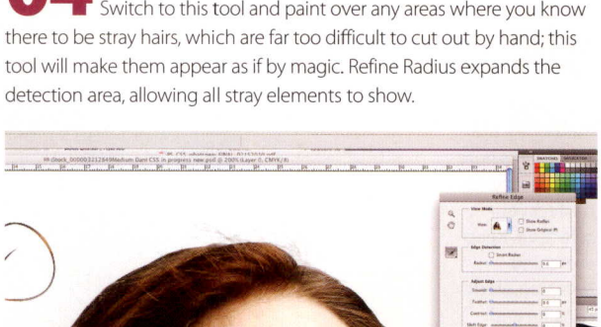
03 Erase Refinements tool

On the left side of the palette sit the Refine Edge and Erase Refinements tools. Select the Erase Refinements tool and paint over a complex edge of your selection. The results are instant – smooth, straight, improved edges, putting an end to scrappy cutouts. A fantastic new feature for tidying up hair or fur.



04 Refine Radius tool

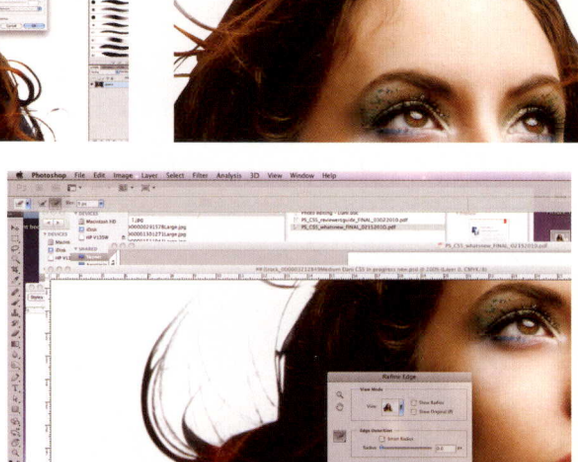
Switch to this tool and paint over any areas where you know there to be stray hairs, which are far too difficult to cut out by hand; this tool will make them appear as if by magic. Refine Radius expands the detection area, allowing all stray elements to show.



> The results are instant – smooth, straight, improved edges, putting an end to scrappy cutouts. This is a fantastic new feature for tidying up hair or fur

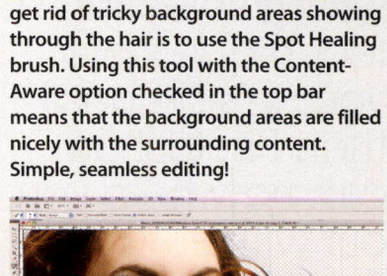
05 Use tools together

You can combine the Refine Radius and Erase Refinements tools when working on an image, but make sure that you use this combo carefully. Use the Refine Radius tool to pick out the fine details, then tidy up the main selection's edges with the Erase Refinements tool. You are recommended to go slowly when working with these features as they can take some getting used to. However, if you persevere, you'll be rewarded with some impressive results.



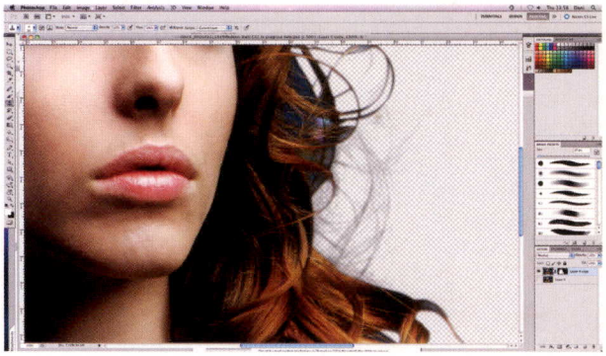
More new features

Another new feature worth bearing in mind is Content-Aware Fill. A great way to get rid of tricky background areas showing through the hair is to use the Spot Healing brush. Using this tool with the Content-Aware option checked in the top bar means that the background areas are filled nicely with the surrounding content. Simple, seamless editing!



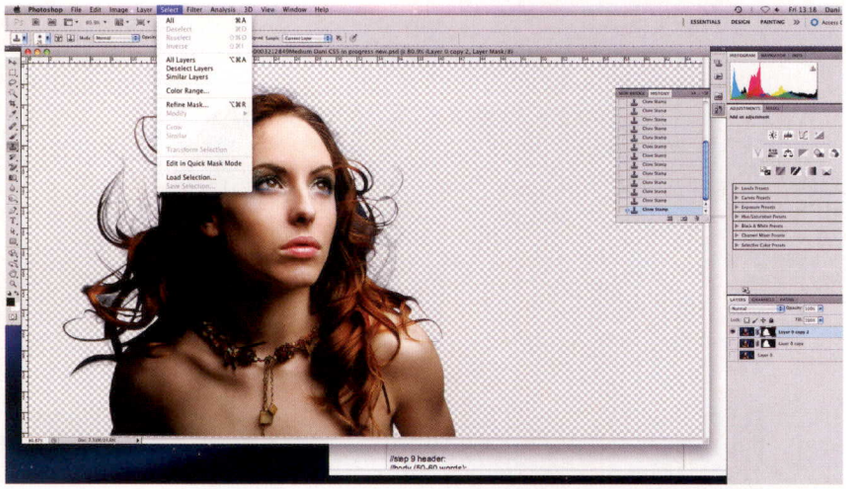
06 Save to New Layer

When happy with the progress made so far, enter Output and select how you wish for your image to be saved. Here we saved as a New Layer with Layer Mask, which does exactly what it says.



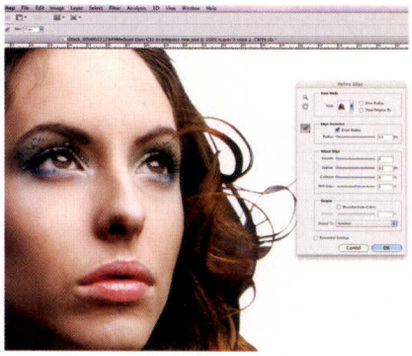
07 Refine mask

Saving like this means you can go back easily and edit your mask. Go to Select>Refine Mask and work back into your image. This way, any extra edits you make can be saved onto another new layer, protecting your original and in-progress work.



08 From the start with Smart Radius

If you're unsure which selection technique suits your image best, then Photoshop can now help you out with its Smart Radius option, which picks the most suitable method for you. With your selection active, open the Refine Edge dialog box, check Smart Radius and the tool will now adapt itself to suit the selection's edges. This is a great tool if your selection includes a combination of straight and wavy edges.

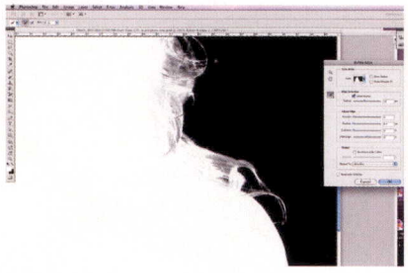


09 Working Smart Radius

With the Smart Radius checked, set the Pixel Radius to 10 and switch to the Black & White viewing mode. Select the Refine Radius tool and paint over the mask on the hair edge. The mask adapts and now more of the finer details are captured.

10 Refining those hair details

If any elements have been included in your mask by mistake, switch to the Erase Refinements tool and get rid of them now. Change the viewing mode to On White to see your selection better. This is a hard technique to master, so be patient and stick with it!



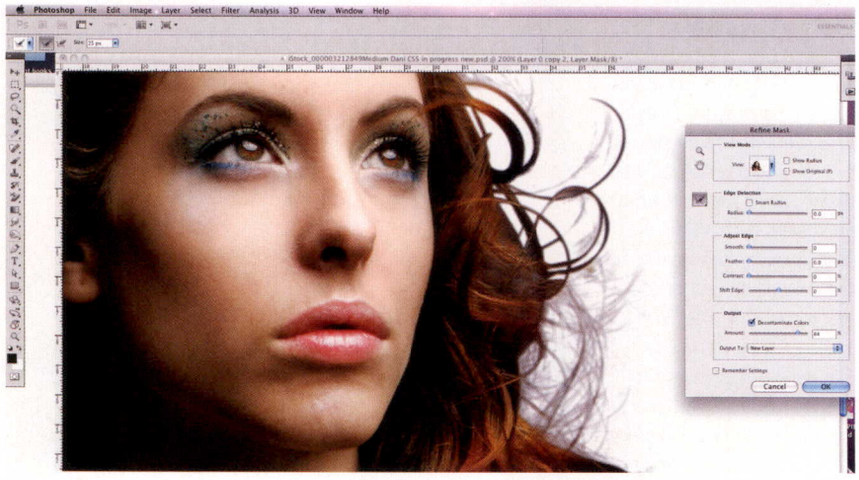
Quick tip

The viewing modes are the best assets here when trying to perfect your selection. Keep switching between Black & White and On White to keep tabs on your mask and the effects of the tools.

> If you're unsure which selection technique suits your image best, then Photoshop can now help you out with its Smart Radius option, which picks the most suitable method for you

11 Decontaminate colours

Lastly, to tidy up the edges, you can now use the Decontaminate feature. Simply check the option and move the slider until the colour fringing in your image has vanished. Once again, choose your saving Output options and finish off as you normally would in Photoshop. These new tools do require patience and work, but with practice they will make your selection process much faster and easier.



showcase

JOSÉ PAULO AMORIM REIS

TITLE I Have the Light

WEBSITE www.zepaulocreation.blogspot.com

"Using a blend of black and white, I tried to make a mixture with vectors created in Photoshop and Illustrator to give more prominence to certain parts of the body. I used simple techniques such as the use of white brushes. With the balls I tried to give some movement. I also used some white splashes for the purpose of further enhancing the model. Finally I added some lightning effects that embellish and finish the image, highlighting the very subtle details that enhance the whole creation."

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PUPPET WARP TOOL

We explore the new Puppet Warp feature in CS5 to go beyond posing a marionette

Our expert

Kirk Nelson
www.thepixelpro.com.

Kirk is a digital artist and Photoshop trainer. His work can also be found in *Photoshop Creative* magazine. He is available for training and commissions.

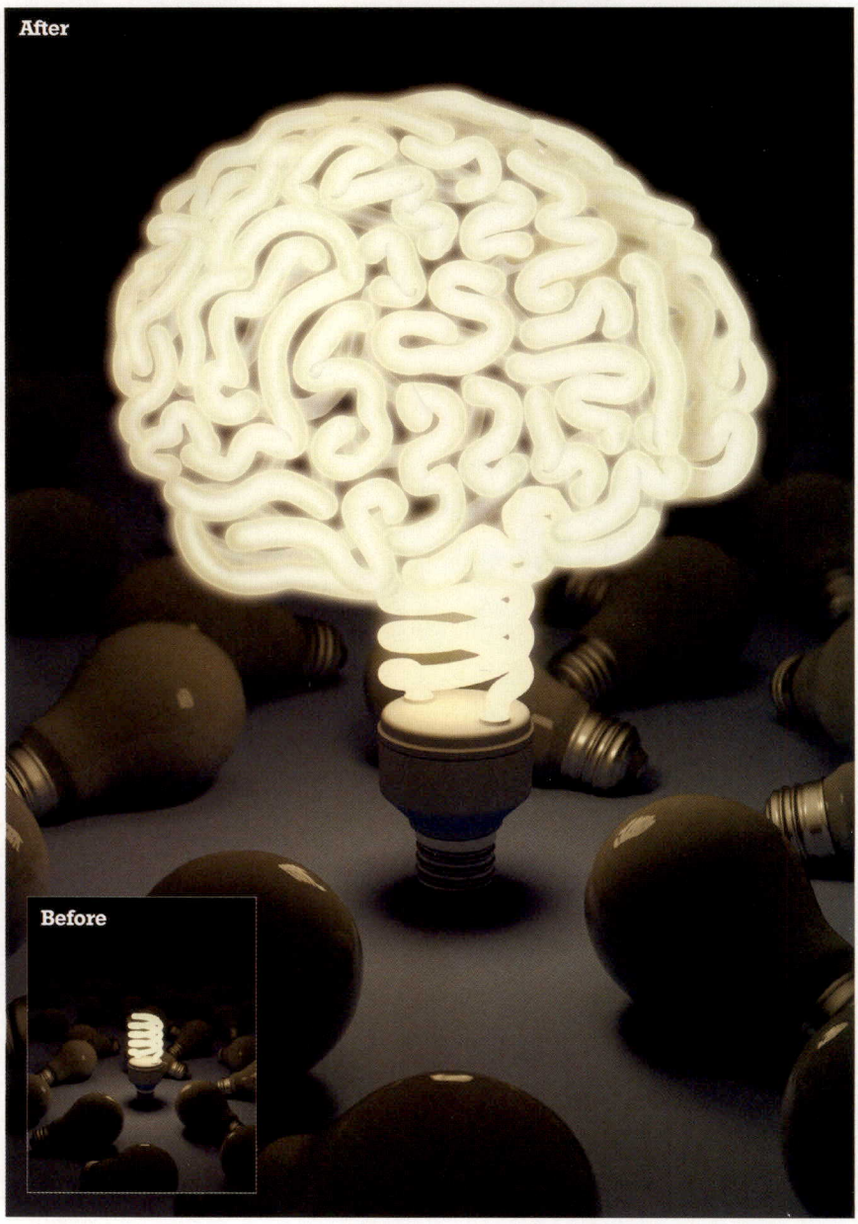
Source files

You will need to purchase the start image, courtesy of iStockphoto.com, created by the member 'evirgen'.

Photoshop CS5 is upon us! And with it there are plenty of new and amazing features to be used and abused. One of the most exciting new features is called Puppet Warp. This tool assigns a type of deformation grid to a layer's contents and then enables you to use pins to push, pull, prod and otherwise provoke the pixels of that layer to make a whole new form. Most demos of this new feature unsurprisingly feature a puppet or marionette being posed with ease. Previously, accomplishing such a task would have involved cutting the image up into dozens of individual layers and positioning them by hand and then trying to blend the joints back together. Puppet Warp amazingly simplifies the entire process.

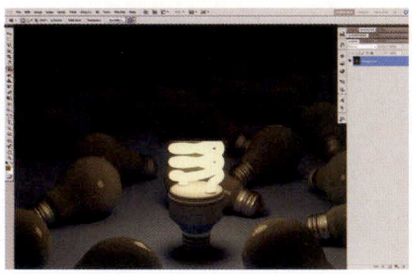
We wanted to push this tool even further, so instead of posing another figurine, we decided to see how one might use this feature for illustration. Taking a straight shape and twisting it around, pretzel like, is not something you'd normally want to attempt in Photoshop. But over the next few pages, we'll show you just how easy this is with the power of the new Puppet Warp.

> "Use pins to push, pull, prod and provoke the pixels to make a new form"



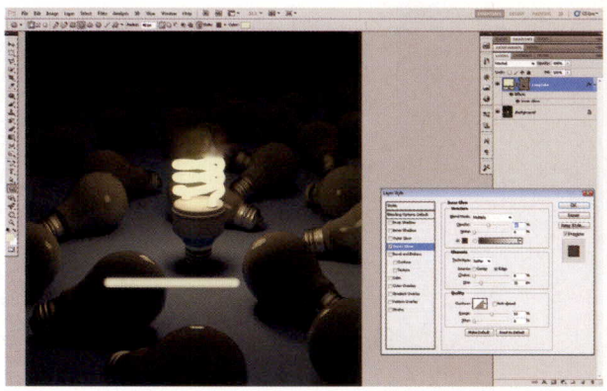
01 Start with a bright idea

Download the start image and open in Photoshop. Create a tight rectangular selection for the top two spirals of the bulb and use the Patch tool to remove the spirals by dragging the selection to a different part of the background.



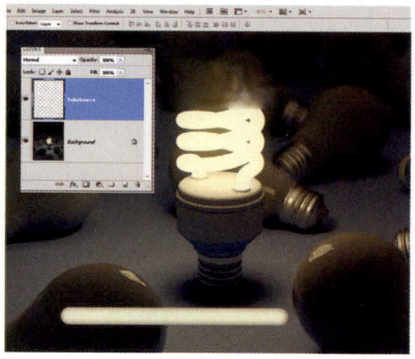
02 Source tube

Set the foreground colour to a pale yellow ('#ebead1') and use the Rounded Rectangle tool with a Radius of 40px. Draw a long thin tube about the same thickness as the light tubes. Add an Inner Glow layer style with the Blend Mode set to Multiply, colour to dark grey and Size to 35px.



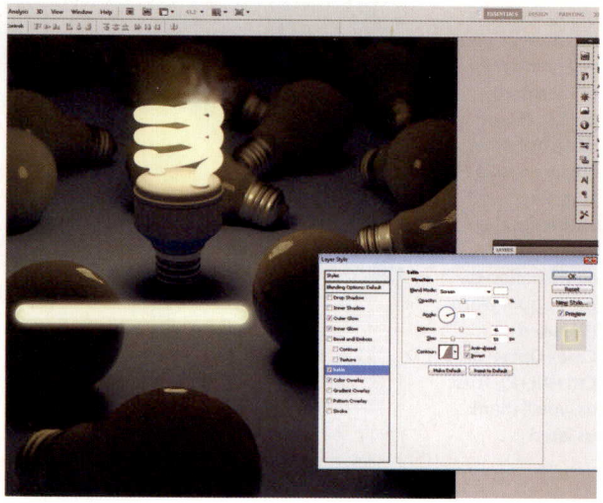
03 Easy Rasterize

Usually rasterizing a shape with layer styles is a multi-step process. Here's a quick shortcut: create a new empty layer above the shape. Select both layers and press Cmd/Ctrl+E to merge them. The vector mask and layer styles are both rasterized in one easy step! Name the combined layer 'TubeSource' for future reference.



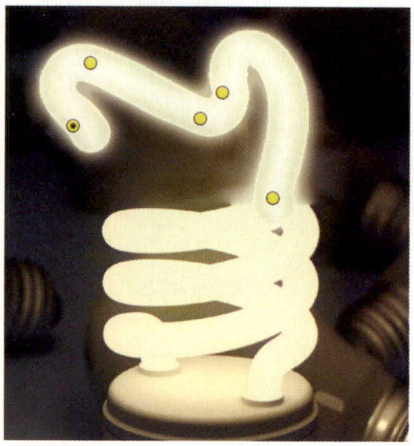
04 A whole new style

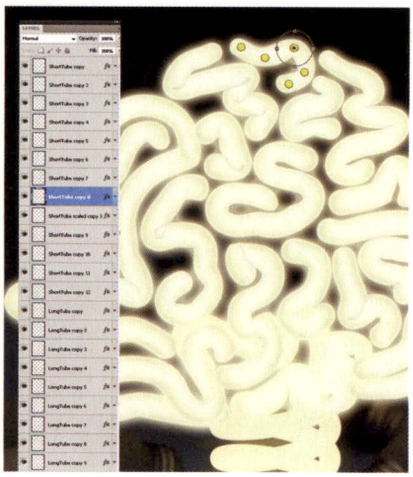
Add the following layer styles to the TubeSource layer to enhance the Puppet Warp effects: Outer Glow colour ('f9f8db') with a Size of 46 pixels, Inner Glow of the same colour, with Opacity at 89%, Choke 7% and a Size of 24 pixels. Stain with a white colour, and set the Blend Mode to Screen, Angle 19, Distance 46 pixels, and Size to 58 pixels. Now apply a Colour Overlay with the same pale yellow shade and set the Opacity to 60%.



05 Puppet master

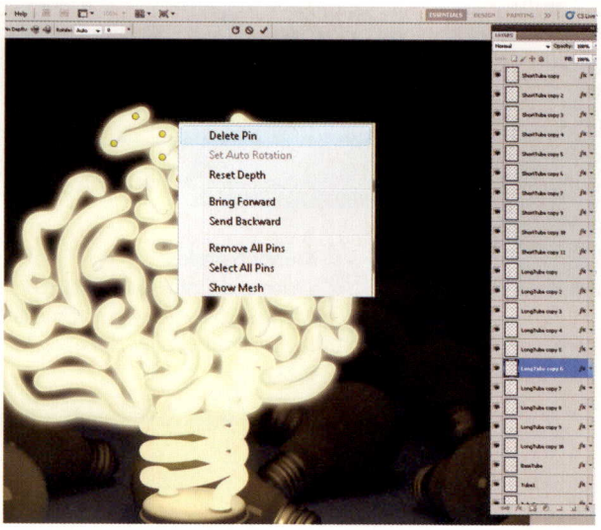
Create a duplicate of the source tube and go to Edit>Puppet Warp. Click near one end of the tube to create the first pin. Drag this pin to where you want the tube to start. Click and drag another pin at about the halfway point of the tube. Add another point to the end and begin twisting the tube into shape.





06 Brain builder

Continue duplicating and warping light tubes to create a brain-shaped illustration. Pins can be repositioned simply by dragging them. They can be removed by holding down Opt/Alt and clicking on the pin when you see the cursor change into a scissor icon, or by Ctrl/right-clicking a pin and using the Context menu.

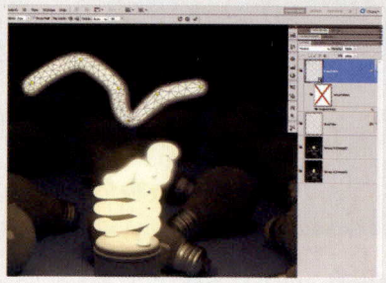


08 Get the kinks out

While the Puppet Warp feature usually does quite a remarkable job of twisting and turning the tubes, sometimes the corners can kink, leaving undesirable curves to the shape. These can be alleviated by manually adjusting the rotation of that corner pin. Hold down Opt/Alt and mouse close to the pin until a rotational ring appears. Turn the ring to smooth out the kinks.

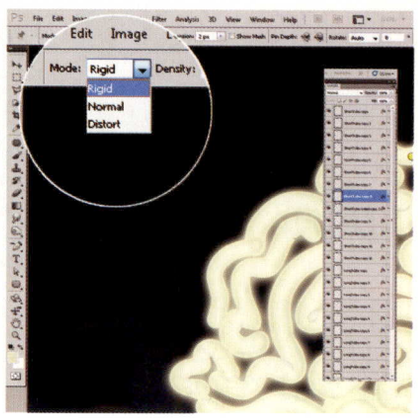
Smarter puppets

While editing a shape with the Puppet Warp tool, you'll probably encounter a situation where you'd like to go back and reposition one of the pins, or maybe add or remove pins. But after applying the warp, all that information disappears! What to do? If you convert the layer to a Smart Object (Layer>Smart Objects> Convert to Smart Object) before you apply the Puppet Warp, the controls are all retained. When you run the Puppet Warp on the Smart Object again, you will notice that the pin assignments and positioning is all exactly how you left it.



07 Rigid is right

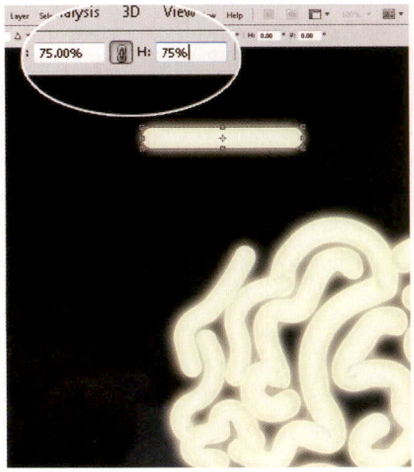
In shaping some of the tubes into tight curves, the tubes bend with almost too much elasticity. The effect is more of a wet noodle than a piece of shaped glass. To counter this, use the Rigid setting for the mode. This attempts to create straighter connections between the pins.



> While editing, if you convert the layer to a Smart Object before you apply the Puppet Warp, the controls are retained

09 Source adjustment

The tubes near the top of the brain illustration will need to be smaller and closer together to be convincing. To retain a consistent sizing, make another duplicate of the source tube and scale it down to 75%. Use this as the new source for the smaller tubes.

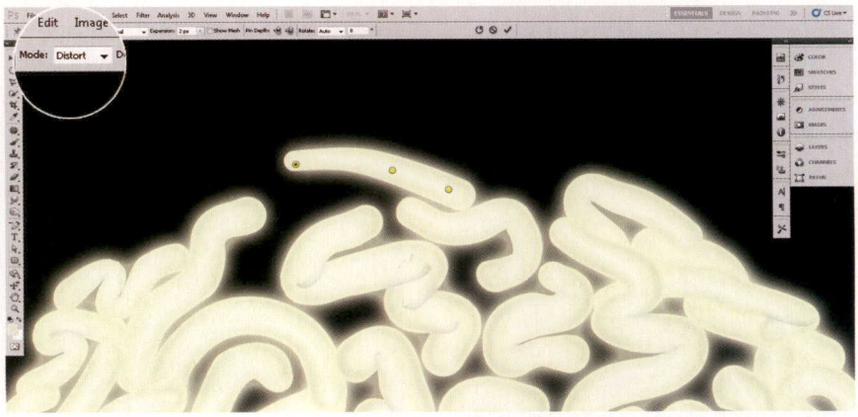


Quick tip

Puppet Warp by default does not come with a keyboard shortcut. While going through this project, you will quickly tire of repeatedly pulling Puppet Warp from the Edit menu. Go to Edit>Keyboard Shortcuts and assign a key combination to the Puppet Warp. (We used Cmd+Opt+P or Ctrl+Alt+P), Trust us, you'll thank us later!

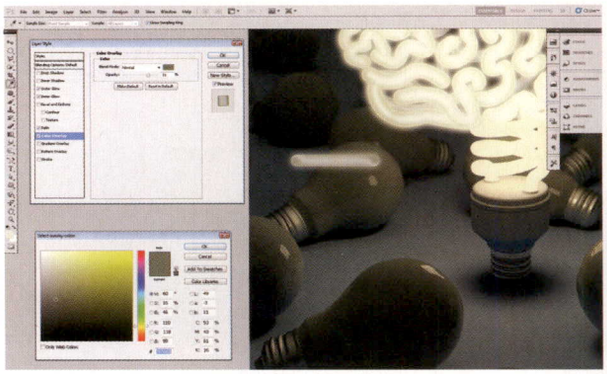
10 Distance distortion

The tubes near the edges should appear to wrap around the curve of the brain form. To create this illusion, the tubes need to decrease in size as they travel further back into the scene. To do this, change the mode to Distort before adding the pins. This, in effect, makes the pins attempt to distort the object in 3D space.



11 Reverse side

The connecting tubes on the reverse side should be similar, but different in appearance. Make another duplicate of the source tube and change the layer styles so the Inner Glow Opacity is 27%. Change the Colour Overlay colour to '#767663' and the Opacity to 71%.

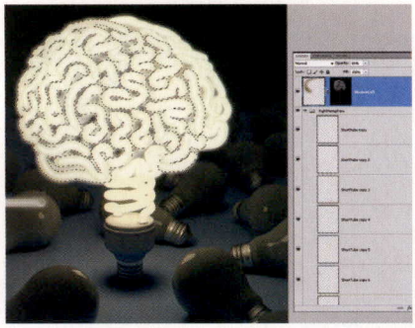


12 Complete the connections

Using the new darker tube as a source, create duplicates and move them into place behind the glowing assortment of tubes. Using the Puppet Warp feature, connect the ends of the primary tubes and fill in gaps where needed. To avoid confusion, it's also helpful to create groups for the dozens of tube layers.

13 Light and shadow

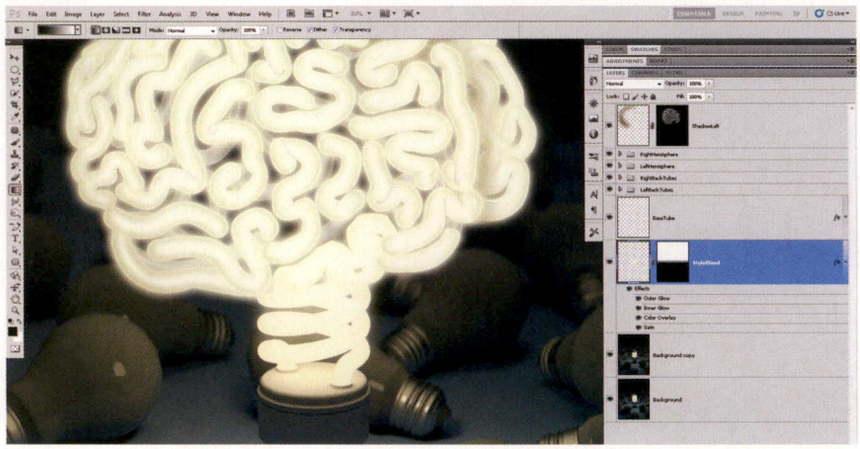
Create a selection of all the tubes on one side of the brain by Shift+Cmd/Ctrl-clicking each layer thumbnail. Create a new layer above the tubes and use the combined selection as a layer mask. Use a large soft brush with a dull rust colour ('#7c6c34') to add shading to the outer edges of the illustration.

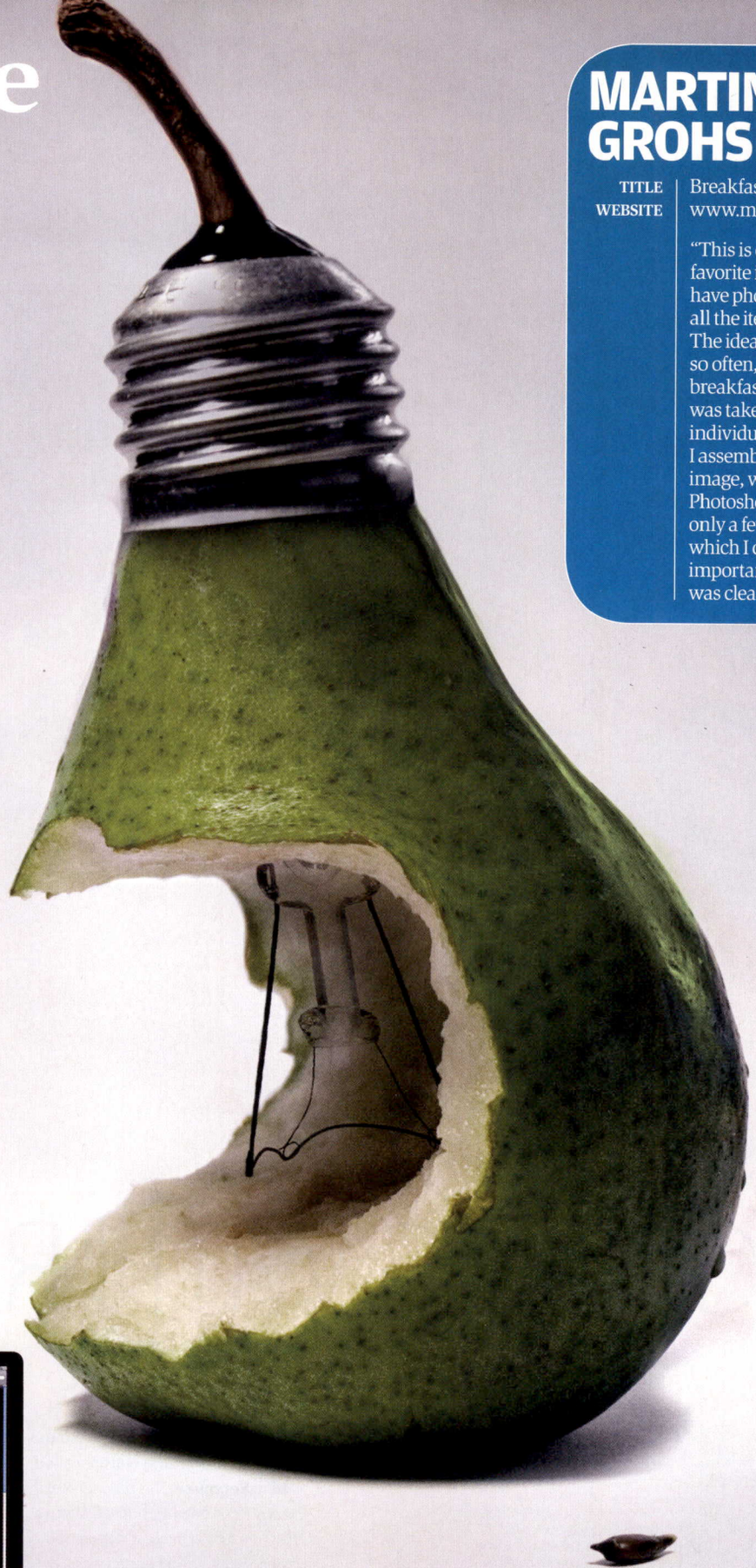


> "You will quickly tire of repeatedly pulling Puppet Warp from the Edit menu. Go to Edit>Keyboard Shortcuts and assign a key combination to the Puppet Warp"

14 Blended styles

On the background layer, Quick Select the original bulb tubes and duplicate them to a new layer. Copy and Paste the layer styles from the illustrated tubes onto this layer. Add a Gradient mask and opt for Linear to fade the layer out at the bottom. This ensures that the glowing layer style blends into the photographic glow.





MARTIN GROHS

TITLE Breakfast
WEBSITE www.martin-grohs.de

"This is one of my favorite images, because I have photographed all the items themselves. The idea came to me, as so often, when having breakfast. The picture was taken from four individual photos, which I assembled into an image, with the help of Photoshop. There are really only a few layer masks, which I combined. It was important for me that it was clean and high-class."

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WORKING WITH REPOUSSÉ

How to use the new Repoussé feature to create cool 3D typography and compose a scene to do your text justice

Our expert

Luca Molnar
www.lucamolnar.com

Luca Molnar has worked as a graphic designer since 2005 in Hungary. In that time, she has worked for magazines, record labels and design agencies. She's also represented by Illustration Ltd.

Source files

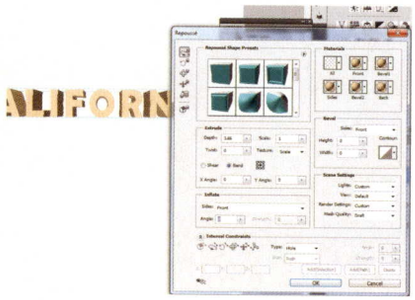
On the CD you will find a document with links to download all the free stock imagery used, and one additional stock photo. We recommend that you download all the images into one folder before you begin.

This year Adobe surprised us with a new, amazing feature called Repoussé. This groundbreaking tool for Photoshop is every designer's dream as we can finally create stunning 3D typography without having to use any other programs. Repoussé is very easy to work with, especially if you've already had some experience with more established 3D software such as CINEMA 4D.

We're very happy to introduce you to Repoussé in just a few easy steps. Since it's summer, we thought it was a perfect time to create a summery image based around the subject of a sunny Californian beach. The central part of the design is the 3D typography, although we will also add a number of different elements such as beach balls, palm trees, splashing water and ice cubes to build up a setting which reflects the text and the summer theme. Essentially, we will bring together a multitude of stock images to really make the typography come alive. You will not only learn how to create 3D typography, but how to place cutouts to develop a final composition which is both dynamic and realistic. Lastly, we will place some lighting effects throughout the image to add a final touch of Californian glamour. Think Malibu and Santa Monica and get creative!

01 Create the typography

Select the Text tool, with the font Berlin Sans at 80pt and type out 'California'. Set the space between the letters at 120. Then go to 3D> Repoussé>Text Layer and select Wood Balsa from the Materials panel, adjusting Depth to 3.66pt. We won't be changing any of the other options, so click OK.



02 Add the right material

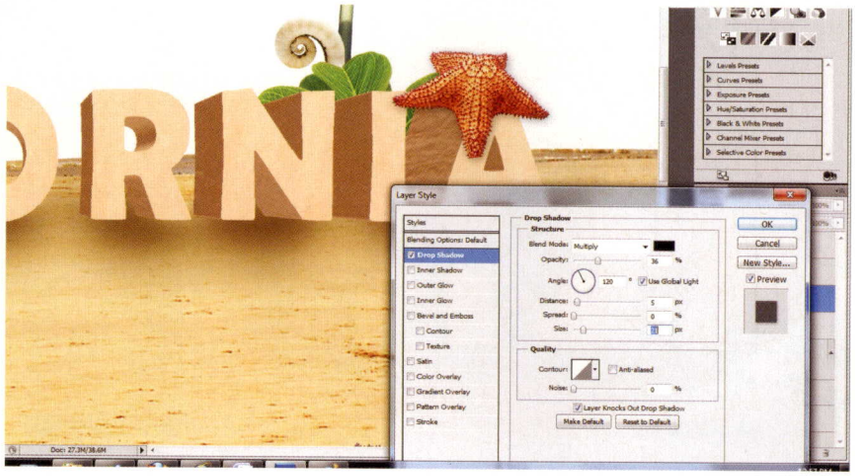
Now open the 3D window (Window>3D) and go to the Materials panel. Change Illumination and Ambient to soft brown, before going to New Material and saving the changes. This is very helpful because you can now simply apply your new material to all other parts of the typography, from Front, Back to Sides etc.

03 Life's a beach!

Open the Landscape image from the link on the disc, place behind the text, then erase the background. Duplicate this layer and place it under the first layer, before once again erasing as before. After this, choose a soft brush and paint some shadows under the typography. Cut out the windsock from the Beach Flags 3 image and place it above the typography.

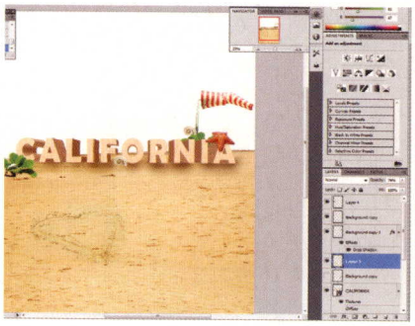
04 Develop the concept

We will continue to add stock to build up our composition. Open and cut out the Beach plant image to place in front and behind 'California'. Repeat this process with the Sea Shells 1 and Sea Star images. Go to Blending Options and apply Drop Shadow to the sea star, before placing the creature at the top of the last 'A'. You can also add beach balls now (see Beach ball and Mid-air Beach Ball).



05 Draw a heart in the sand

Place 'Heart written in sand' on the beach and erase the edges with soft brushes. Now go to Image>Adjustments>Curves and find a colour for the heart, which matches the tone of the sand. Finally set the heart layer's Opacity to 74%. Open Coconut Trees 1 and cut out the trees. Place the palm trees behind the typography and choose a nice light blue for the sky.

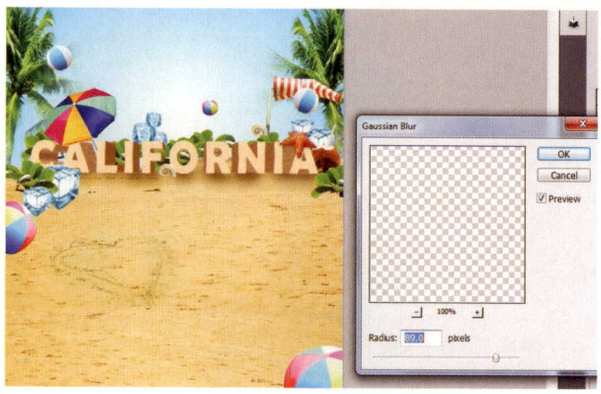


06 Have an ice time

Cut out the ice cube from the IceCube image then go to Image>Adjustments> Hue/Saturation, choose Colorize and make it blue. Duplicate and place several cubes around the typography. Next open Beach Umbrella, cut out the parasol and place behind the text. You can also erase parts of the palm trees in order to decrease some of the noise in the scene.

07 Work on the sky

Select the palm trees and go to Image>Adjustments>Curves and make the trees a more intense green. The design still looks a little too busy so erase more of the palm trees to create space. Select a large soft brush – around 1,500pt – and paint a white point, then go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur, with Radius set to 89 pixels.

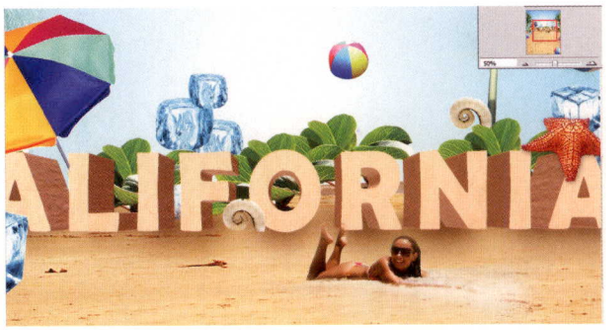


Finding the right colours

We use a combination of tools to create a more realistic colour spectrum in this design. For example Curves is extremely helpful when you cut out many elements from different pictures and you need them to be more consistent. If you go to Image> Adjustments>Curves, you will see that there are many presets to choose from. You can also play around with the Red, Green and Blue curves. Another great tool for tweaking colours is the Hue/Saturation option (Image>Adjustments>Hue/ Saturation), which can also help unite your various elements within one scene. Finally you can make some basic changes to tone with the Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer (Image>Adjustments>Brightness/ Contrast). Just experiment!

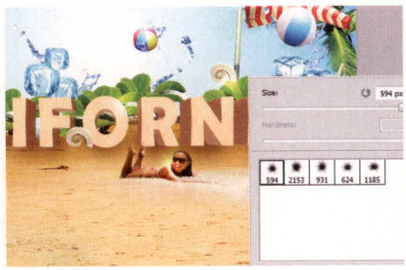
08 Splashing out

Open 'Session on the beach 2', cut out the model and place her just a little below the typography. Also, if you haven't already, cut out the beach balls from the aforementioned images, as well as some parts of the water splash from Splash 1 and 'Lemon in a glass'. Colorize the elements in Hue/Saturation (Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation). Duplicate your layers several times and place the water splashes around the beach balls and ice cubes to add drama.



09 Start to add glamour

Now we can start adding some lighting effects to the scene. Choose any of your light brushes, change the layer's style to Overlay and apply to the areas that you want highlights; particularly focus on the ice cubes, umbrella and beach balls. You can also add some little stars to your design for some extra sparkle.

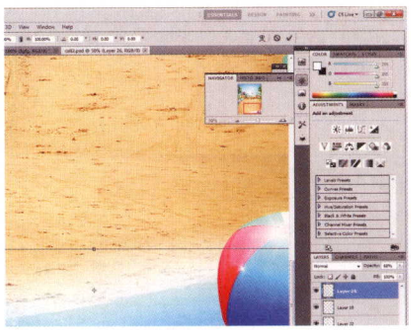


10 Cosmic details

To make your final design more realistic, you can add some clouds to the sky. We usually use preset brushes to do this. If you don't currently have any cloud brushes, you can easily download them from the internet. We incorporated some stars and cosmic elements to the sky as well to boost the visual impact.

11 Surf's up!

Open the Summer: beach image and place at the bottom of the design. Now you should carefully erase some parts of the image where the sea hits the shore. Lastly go to Edit>Free Transform and transform the sea a little to increase its fluid feel before placing in the right corner of the image under the beach ball.



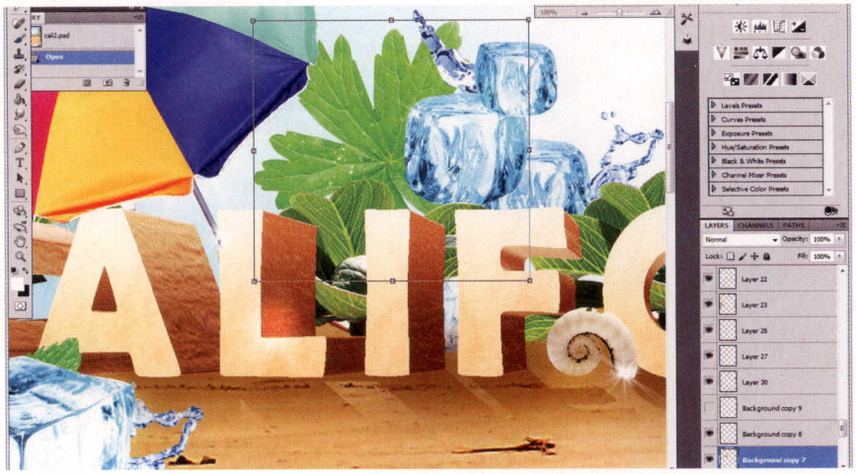
Quick tip

When you've finished adding materials and lighting to your 3D type, be sure to rasterize your layer. By doing this, Photoshop CS5 will use a lot less RAM so will work much faster. Since your text will now be on an ordinary layer, you can select it and apply your preferred tools for finishing touches, such as Dodge and Burn as well as your favourite blending modes.

> "When you've finished adding materials and lighting to your 3D type, be sure to rasterize your layer. By doing this, Photoshop CS5 will use a lot less RAM so will work much faster"

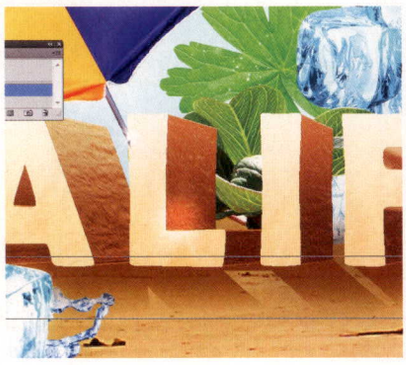
12 Make it more realistic

Let's cut out some more plants from the Leaf image and 'plant3.jpg' (which you'll find on the disc) and place them behind the 'California' text, beach balls and some of the other elements. Add as many plants as you want until it feels right, though be careful not to overcrowd the image. If you wish, you can adapt the plants' colouring using Curves or Hue/Saturation.



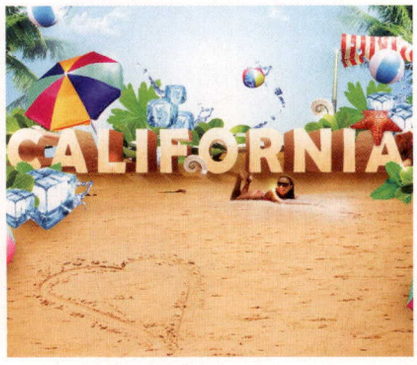
13 Add shadows to typography

Duplicate the typography then go to Edit>Free Transform>Flip Horizontal and place it under the original. Go to Image>Adjustments> Hue/Saturation, set Lightness to -100, blending mode to Color Overlay and change the colour to brown. After this, carefully erase the bottom of the letters and set Opacity to approximately 50%.



14 Final touches

Now you need to rasterize the 3D typography (3D>Rasterize). If you want, use the Burn tool to darken the bottom of the letters and the Dodge tool to lighten the top. Once satisfied, merge all of the layers and play around with the overall contrast of the image and, if you wish, continue to darken edges with the Burn tool.



showcase

RUDI SILBERMANN

TITLE Sister Of Night
WEBSITE http://rudisilbermann.daportfolio.com

"*Sister Of Night* was inspired by the music of Depeche Mode. The artwork expresses emotions of bondage and entrapment... As far as I know *Sister Of Night* is a song about heroin addiction. I guess this was just my way of expressing my emotions that I picked up from the song. I used stock images for the models and the bird. I masked it out in Photoshop. The cage I created in 3D.
Then I added lots of layers and dirt texture overlays in Photoshop."

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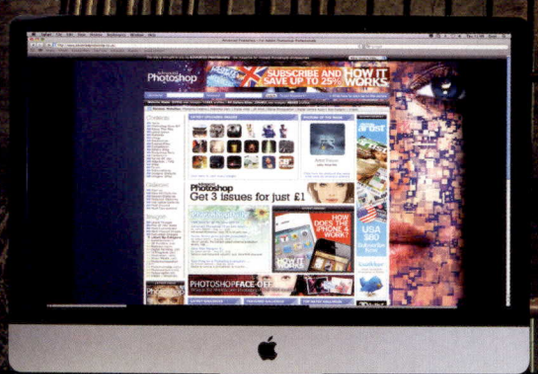

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Q&A

Helpdesk

Over the next eight pages, we take a look at your Photoshop queries, with plenty of professional advice to help you improve your digital artwork skills

Fusing photography and digital painting

I'm working on a digital artwork that uses digital painting and photography. How do I get the elements to integrate, so that the whole thing looks like it's been painted from scratch?

– Lily Farrow

Advanced Photoshop: Once you have all of your digital and photographic elements in place, create new layers over the top of your work to utilise the Sample All Layers tool. Make the most of using Overlay in your layer blending modes to enhance colour and lighting for continuity, and finish with a Texture Overlay. By finishing a piece in this manner, you can fine-tune the photographic aspect of it and customise it to look as painted as you wish.

© Aimee Stewart

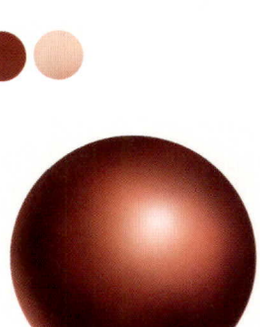
Bring a sphere to life

How can I make 2D spheres appear three-dimensional? Every time I try, they still appear flat! Where am I going wrong?
– Tom Johnson

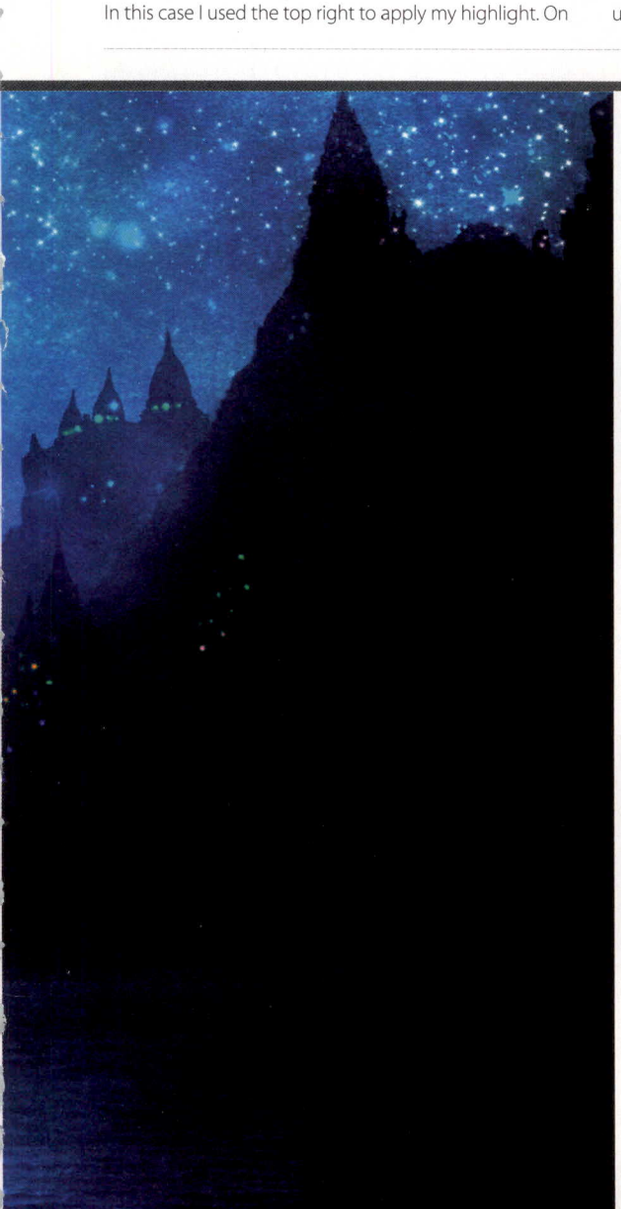
Advanced Photoshop: Start by picking a midtone, a dark shadow and a bright highlight from a colour of your choice. Make sure they are not too saturated. Create a circle with the Elliptical Marquee tool in your midtone colour. While it is still selected, get a large Airbrush (soft edges) and paint around the edge with your shadow at about 30% Opacity. Layer it on until the sphere starts to take shape.

Now we need to create an area where light is reflecting. In this case I used the top right to apply my highlight. On low Opacity, click once with a soft round brush, use the bracket key to downsize the brush and click once more, but with white instead of your highlight. If it's on a reflective surface, paint some light at the bottom.

Now use your Burn and Dodge tools to darken the shadows and add some subtle light. Be sure to change the Range as necessary for the Burn and Dodge tools (at the top of Photoshop). Keep blending and shading until it has a 3D appearance. Examining a sphere can help you understand light and shading as well.

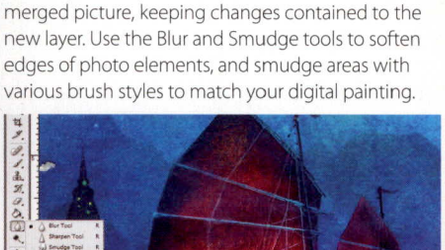


SPHERE: *Here is a simple sphere; midtone, shadow and highlight are pictured at the top*



1 Sample All Layers

Create a new layer and select Sample All Layers on the Options bar. This will treat all layers as a merged picture, keeping changes contained to the new layer. Use the Blur and Smudge tools to soften edges of photo elements, and smudge areas with various brush styles to match your digital painting.

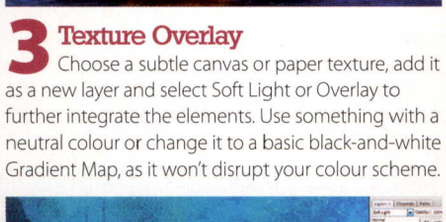


2 Layer modes: Overlay

On a new layer, select Overlay and decrease the Opacity of your brush to 15%. Now you can saturate your photo elements with stylised colour as needed, even sampling your digital painting to match colours. Adjust the Opacity value as needed.

3 Texture Overlay

Choose a subtle canvas or paper texture, add it as a new layer and select Soft Light or Overlay to further integrate the elements. Use something with a neutral colour or change it to a basic black-and-white Gradient Map, as it won't disrupt your colour scheme.



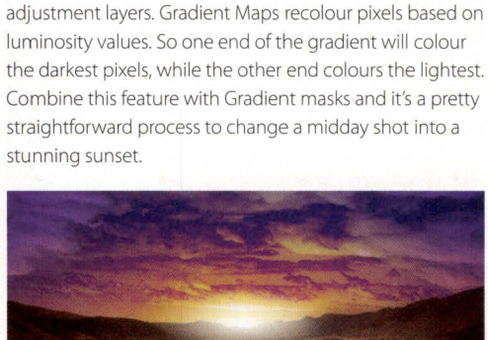
Technique tip

To further the effectiveness of the Gradient Maps, try masking out certain luminosity values. For example, if you wish to target only the bright areas of a set of clouds for recolouring, go to Select> Color Range and choose 'highlights', then use the selection as a layer mask on the Gradient Map.

Photoshop sunsets

I have some rather flat landscape images and I thought that they might look better if I had managed to capture the same scene at sunset. Is there a way of simulating this in Photoshop?
– Mark Gentry

Advanced Photoshop: The initial temptation here would be to replace the sky in the image with a sunset from a different image. But that's not the answer. How would you adjust the colours within an image to simulate a sunset? The best approach is to use several Gradient Map adjustment layers. Gradient Maps recolour pixels based on luminosity values. So one end of the gradient will colour the darkest pixels, while the other end colours the lightest. Combine this feature with Gradient masks and it's a pretty straightforward process to change a midday shot into a stunning sunset.



FROM DAY TO NIGHT: *Gradient Maps are ideal for creating colourful sunsets with ease*

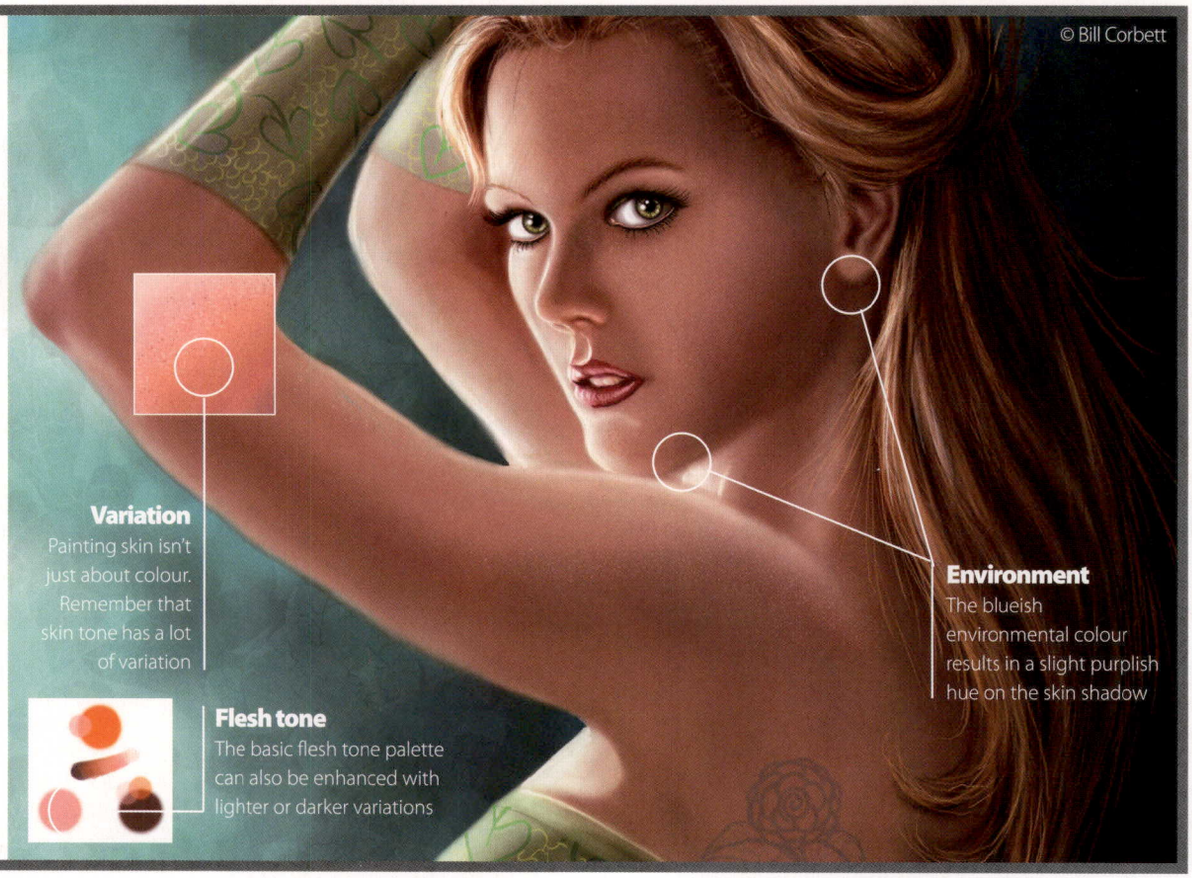
Q&A

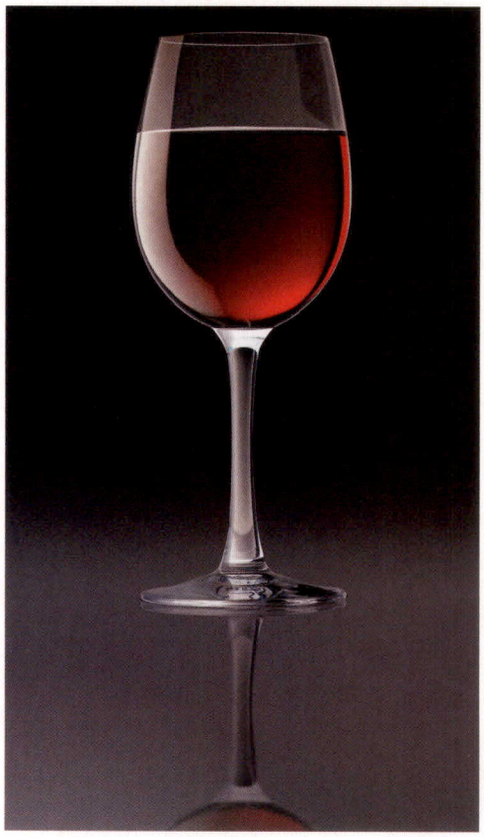
Skin advice

How do I paint realistic skin tones in Photoshop? Is it more to do with the colours or the brushes?
– Julian Rogers

Advanced Photoshop: Simply put, realistic skin tones can be mixed from a combination of pink, orange and dark brown.

To create your flesh tone palette, paint a large circle of each on a new layer and then create new layers with low Opacity values to overlap smaller circles of colour. When painting, it's important to break up the blended colours with small splatters of lighter and darker tones. It will prevent the skin looking lifeless and plastic. Where possible, try and add a little of the environment colour to the shadow tones.





SHINY TABLE: *Create trendy reflections in Photoshop without having to use a shiny table*

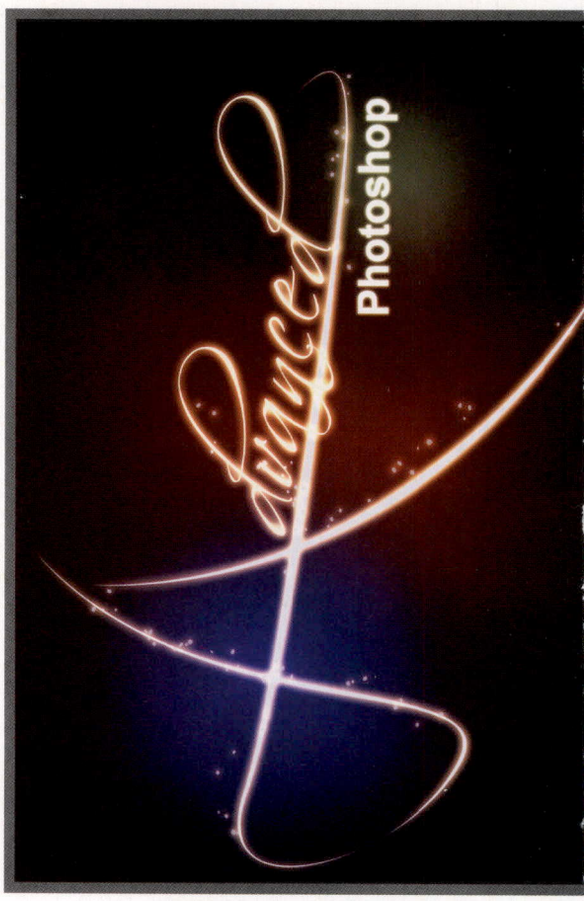
Technique tip

Be thoughtful about your reflections. Remember that in reality a table cannot show a reflection of a surface that is parallel to the reflective surface, so any top-facing portions of the subject should never be shown in a table reflection.

Shiny table reflections

Can you show me how to add a reflection to an object so that it looks as though it is sitting on a shiny surface?
– Rhonda Galenski

Advanced Photoshop: This is a trend that can be seen in design work on the web, print ads and even book covers. The technique isn't difficult, but is frequently applied incorrectly. Begin by creating a selection to separate the object from the background. Then duplicate that object and flip it vertically. Position the duplicate so it's below the original, both by canvas position and layer order. Convert the reflection layer to a Smart Object and set it to Soft Light. Scale the reflection 10-20% vertically, then run the Gaussian Blur filter and choose a strength that blurs the image, but doesn't destroy the details. Use a gradient on the Smart Filter layer mask so the reflection is sharper the closer it is to the original. Add a layer mask to the Smart Object and use the Gradient tool to fade the reflection out.

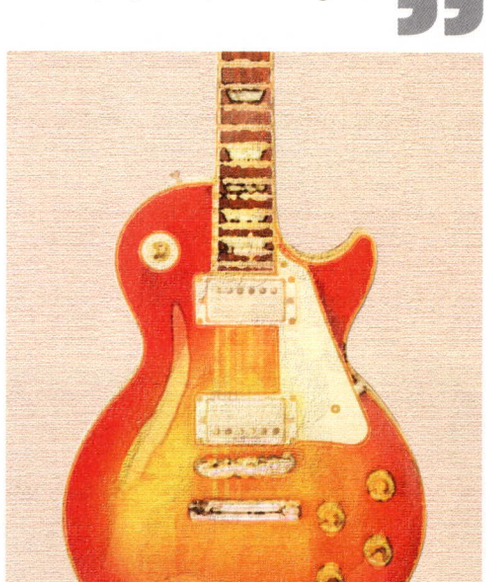


Oil painting

I would really like to know how to get a quick oil painting effect from a photo, as I have an image that I want to convert for use on a website project I am working on.
–Joseph Barnes

Advanced Photoshop: There are a number of different ways in which you can approach this style, and everyone probably has their own preferred technique. However, if it's simply a quick effect that you're looking for, then we'll stick with using a variety of filters and brushes. But if you had more time, then bear in mind that there are more effective methods you could use.

Open your photo, then create a new layer filled with a solid canvas colour. Duplicate the photo layer (moving it above the canvas layer) then run the Glowing Edges filter with the settings set to give clear lines around your subject. Desaturate the layer and Invert it, then set the layer to Multiply and drag the Opacity down until your layer resembles a pencil sketch. Duplicate your Background layer again, dragging it to the top of your layer stack, then increase the Saturation a touch. Use the Palette Knife filter on this layer, then set this layer to Hard Light. Add a Hide All layer mask. With a textured, soft Wet Media brush, paint with white to reveal some colour through the sketchy lines. You can vary your brushstrokes for a more realistic finish here. Take your time to get the whole thing painted. Finally, turn off your original Background layer and add canvas texture from the Texturiser to your canvas layer.



OIL EFFECTS: *Use filters and brushes to create a basic oil-painting effect from a photo*

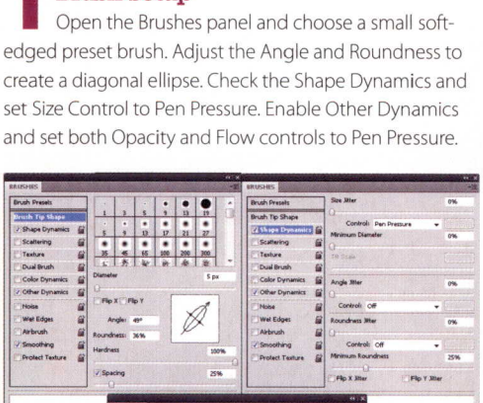
Creative glow effects

I'd love to create some cool glow streaks that I can use for text effects. How do I go about doing this?
– Wendy Reid

Advanced Photoshop: Fun glowing streaks are a sure way to brighten up any design. And you don't need to be a master of the stylus to create those long fluid strokes. Begin by creating paths with the Pen tool. Then stroke the paths with the process outlined in the step-by-step here. Add an Outer Glow layer style and a Drop Shadow with the mode turned to Screen and the Shadow Color adjusted to be a bright hue. Finish with a handful of glowing brush dots near the streaks.

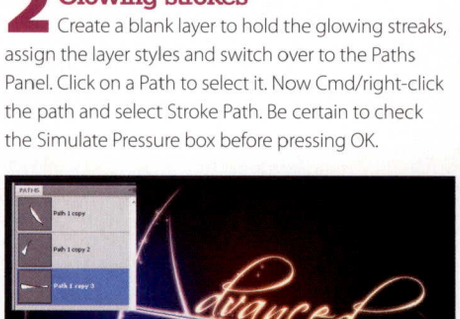
1 Brush setup

Open the Brushes panel and choose a small soft-edged preset brush. Adjust the Angle and Roundness to create a diagonal ellipse. Check the Shape Dynamics and set Size Control to Pen Pressure. Enable Other Dynamics and set both Opacity and Flow controls to Pen Pressure.



2 Glowing strokes

Create a blank layer to hold the glowing streaks, assign the layer styles and switch over to the Paths Panel. Click on a Path to select it. Now Cmd/right-click the path and select Stroke Path. Be certain to check the Simulate Pressure box before pressing OK.



Easy digital portrait backgrounds

What is an easy way to create a cool, textured background for a digital portrait?
– Adam Jones

Advanced Photoshop: Stock imagery can easily add a cool background to a portrait. Observe…

1 Find a texture

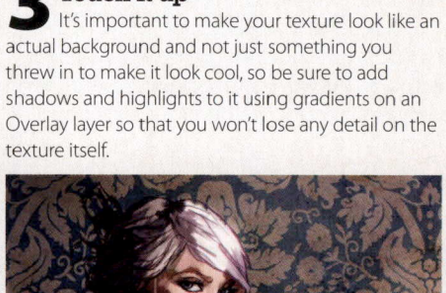
Once you've got your portrait to a level you're happy with, it's important to locate a decent stock image that suits the mood of your portrait (like this vintage wallpaper photo from LoastandTaken.com). Don't just paste in any old texture, as it could ruin an otherwise good portrait!

2 Free Transform

Unless you're very lucky, almost any texture you use will be the wrong size for your portrait and won't gel with the image. The Free Transform tool is your friend here, as you can easily move textures into place. It's also worth experimenting with the texture layer's different blending modes.

3 Touch it up

It's important to make your texture look like an actual background and not just something you threw in to make it look cool, so be sure to add shadows and highlights to it using gradients on an Overlay layer so that you won't lose any detail on the texture itself.



Q&A

Retouching advice

I have a massive archive of digital photos that I need to edit, because they have minor problems like things I need to clone out or horizons that are wonky, but I'm new to retouching. Help!
– Timothy Hoskin

Advanced Photoshop: Retouching is one of the key areas of Photoshop and it is simple to make your images greatly improved if you remember the key rules: keep it simple and don't overdo it. In the sample image we have a wonky horizon, and a lot of cones and birds that ruin the scene. First, we dealt with that horizon. If you have a compatible graphics card and can use the accelerated features of CS4, then you can use the Rotate tool to get pinpoint accuracy. If you don't have this, or you have an older version of Photoshop, then use the Image>Image Rotation>Arbitrary command, working in small 0.25-degree increments to get your horizon straight. Now you will need to Crop the image to remove the background areas that show through. The Clone Stamp tool is the best way of removing unwanted subjects. Make sure you sample little and often, and work meticulously through the image. It's time-consuming, but you'll get better results than replacing huge chunks of image in one go.

RETOUCHING YOUR PHOTO: *Here we have straightened and cleaned up our image*

Technique tip

Using Photo Filters in Photoshop is more versatile than an actual piece of equipment. But you can make them even more flexible by using them as an adjustment layer. Simply go to Layer> New Adjustment Layer>Photo Filter and then you can readjust your settings whenever you want to.

Hidden Photo Filters

I hear that there are Photo Filters in Photoshop, but I can't find them! Where are they, and are they the same as using filters on a DSLR when shooting landscapes?
– Anne Paramount

Advanced Photoshop: Traditional colour correction lens filters are a common tool used by photographers to help compensate for unbalanced lighting. They are frequently used to eliminate unwanted colour casts from light sources. With roots deep in the photography field, you'd expect Photoshop to include such a well-used and common tool. Yet search all you want in the Filter menu and you won't find them. That's because they are tucked quietly away in the Image>Adjustments menu. You may choose from several warming filters, cooling filters, or select a colour of your own. The Density slider determines how much impact the filter has on the photograph.

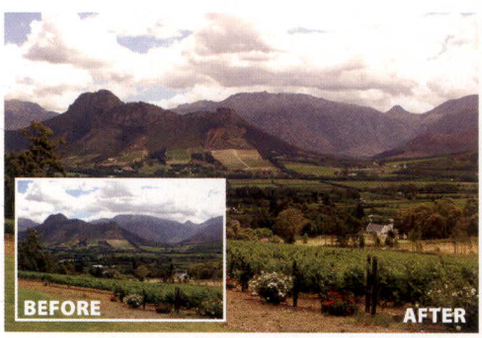


PHOTO FILTER WARMTH: *Add a warm, sunny glow to your landscapes by using a Photo Filter*

Cracked exploding head technique

I'm really enjoying the exploding head style imagery around at the moment. Can you show me how to re-create an authentic effect? Love this.
– Tion Acker

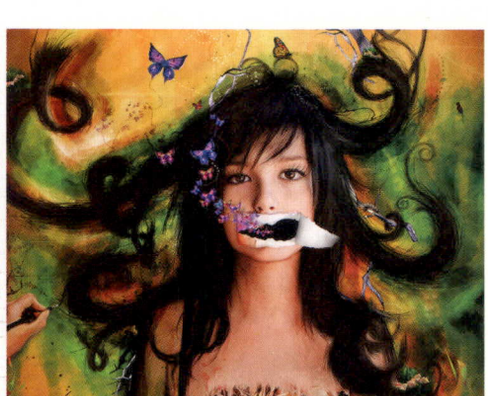
Decorative hair curls

Can you please explain how to paint realistic flyaway curls of hair which seamlessly blend in?
– William Chun

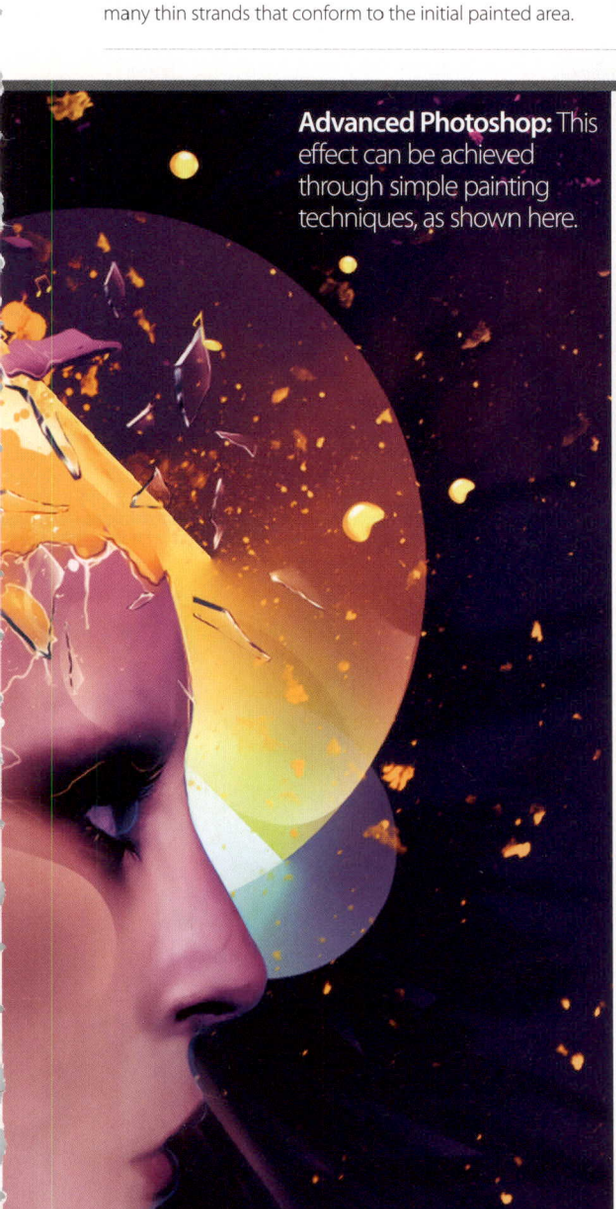
Advanced Photoshop: This technique will take some time to perfect, but with practice you will pick it up and even be able to add your own personal touch. It will work best using a pressure-sensitive graphics tablet. Start by using the Eyedropper tool and selecting one of the darkest shades from the model's hair.

Take a hard brush, around 7 pixels, and slowly paint a base of curls and lines to add to. Next, choose a mid-tone colour from the hair and, using a 3-pixel brush, paint in many thin strands that conform to the initial painted area.

After it starts to take shape, extract an even lighter shade from the model's hair and paint in some highlights that fit with the light source on the model. At this stage, you can also use the Smudge tool on a low setting to blend all the tones and then add strands of hair on top if necessary. Try the Dodge and Burn tools to blend and create highlights and shadows.



TANGLED: *Curly hair additions added to a female model mixed with other elements in the piece © Anthony Giacomino*

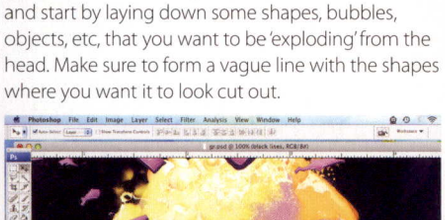


Advanced Photoshop: This effect can be achieved through simple painting techniques, as shown here.

© Anthony Giacomino

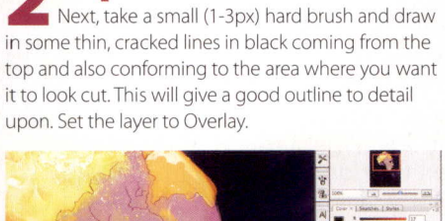
1 The basic idea

Find a head that you want to use the effect on and start by laying down some shapes, bubbles, objects, etc, that you want to be 'exploding' from the head. Make sure to form a vague line with the shapes where you want it to look cut out.



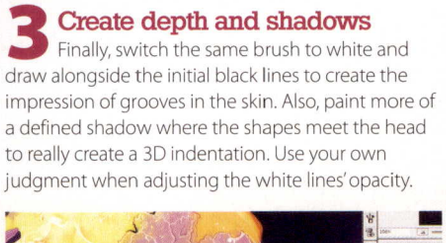
2 Simple cracks

Next, take a small (1-3px) hard brush and draw in some thin, cracked lines in black coming from the top and also conforming to the area where you want it to look cut. This will give a good outline to detail upon. Set the layer to Overlay.



3 Create depth and shadows

Finally, switch the same brush to white and draw alongside the initial black lines to create the impression of grooves in the skin. Also, paint more of a defined shadow where the shapes meet the head to really create a 3D indentation. Use your own judgment when adjusting the white lines' opacity.



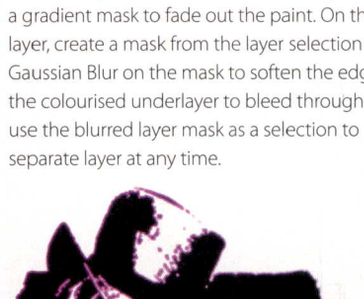
Technique tip

Here's a non-destructive method for softening a layer's edges. Cmd/Ctrl-click the layer thumbnail to create a selection from the layer itself. Use that selection to create a layer mask then run the Gaussian Blur filter on the mask. Using a Levels adjustment afterwards provides even greater control of the border blurring.

Graffiti stencil

I'm looking for a method to create stylised graffiti stencil effects, but I'd like the technique to have a bit more control – like a layer stencil I can paint to.
– Bernice Stames

Advanced Photoshop: Begin with an image that contains strong contrast and clean lines. Use the Cutout filter (Filter>Artistic>Cutout) to create even more contrast between hues. Follow with the Torn Edges filter (Filter>Sketch>Torn Edges) to give the image a ragged black-and-white treatment. Use a Color Range selection to select and copy the black areas to a new layer. Colourise the base layer with a Hue/Saturation adjustment and use a gradient mask to fade out the paint. On the duplicate layer, create a mask from the layer selection and use a Gaussian Blur on the mask to soften the edges, allowing the colourised underlayer to bleed through. You can also use the blurred layer mask as a selection to paint on a separate layer at any time.



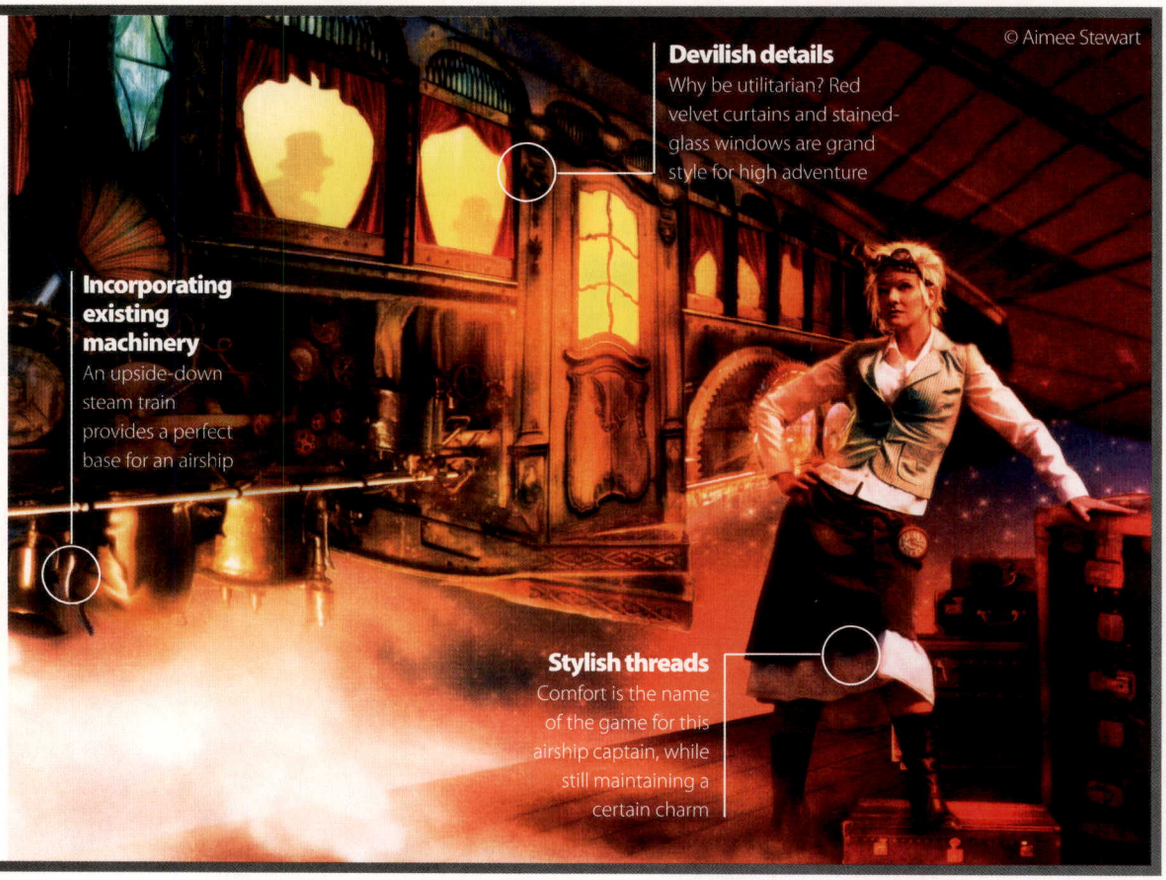
GRAFFITI ART: *Use some creative filter effects and layer masks to produce an easily edited stencil graffiti effect Image credit: iStockphoto.com, number '837819'*

Q&A

Steampunk stylings

Everyone seems to be talking about steampunk these days, and I want to give it a go. What do you think are the key things that I need to think about to be true to the genre?
– James Doubles

Advanced Photoshop: Imagine creating futuristic technology with a 19th Century sense of style, science and invention. The fusion of antiquated mechanics and modern gadgetry presents a world full of artistic potential. While it seems the hallmarks of steampunk have become clockworks, brass, goggles and sepia tones, it is certainly not limited to that. The best way to approach steampunk is by developing your own interpretation and run with it. Innovation is king!



Technique tip

When generating artwork for a piece of graffiti on a wall, like that shown in the screenshot below, don't just use the fonts as they come. To achieve the hand-painted appearance that is so crucial to achieving a realistic effect, you will need to move and shift the letters around by hand. Converting the text to shapes first will allow you to modify each letterform individually. Turn some one way, some another, move them above and below the baseline, even mix up the sizes to ensure that it looks like it's been drawn by hand.

URBAN ARTWORK: *Use a variety of filters and blending modes to create realistic graffiti*

Digital vandalism

I'm trying to add a grungy urban look to some of my city photos. I've got some great walls, but they really look far too pristine. What's the best way to create text that looks like graffiti?
– Meredith Sierra

Advanced Photoshop: Hi Meredith, good question! Adding a bit of vandalism to a wall is a great way to create that extra bit of realism to an image.

Before you begin, create a copy of the scene, desaturate it and then add a subtle Gaussian Blur. Save this as a separate file to be used later on. Next, spend some time developing your graffiti artwork and place it over the wall in your image when it's ready to be applied. If the graffiti is not already a single layer, merge it down to one.

Now add a slight blur to the artwork via Filter>Blur>Blur. Cmd/Ctrl-click the layer thumbnail to create a selection and go to Select>Modify>Border and enter a value of ten pixels. Go to Filter>Blur>Blur More to soften the edges of the artwork. Deselect and go to Filter>Distort>Displace. Set the Scale around six pixels and target the greyscale file created earlier to wrap the artwork along the brick shapes. Set this layer's blending mode to Soft Light. Finally, duplicate the layer and set the blending mode to Overlay, and then reduce the Opacity value as needed.

Adding patches of grass

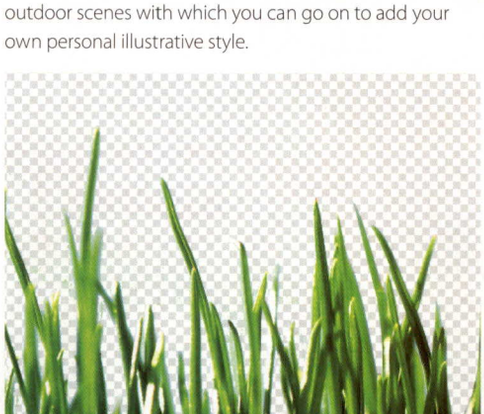
Can you please show me how to create earth and grass effects like the image, *Gaia*, in your portfolio? It's a very hard effect to achieve; I'm sure it takes various techniques to get it right!
– Simon Peters

Advanced Photoshop: Great question! The effect is actually not very difficult; it will just take some time.

Rather than using brushes or shapes to mimic grass, you can simply make a careful extraction of a close-up photo of grass blades. The first thing to do is make sure you are zoomed in at least four times the actual size of the photograph. Attention to detail is key, because you will be extracting the tops of many individual blades of grass. Once you are zoomed in, you can tackle the extraction in multiple ways. The Polygonal Lasso tool can work effectively as long as you avoid creating sharp edges. If you are more comfortable using the Pen tool, by all means give it a try. Another method could be erasing using a graphics tablet.

After taking a lot of time and care perfecting the extraction, perhaps the most important part is using it strategically within your composition. Be mindful that placing the grass around certain objects works more effectively than others. Try to blend the bottom in with the surroundings by adding elements such as dirt, flowers, etc. Additionally, using a graphics tablet to paint a few individual blades of grass straying from the patch will help it look less clumpy.

Eventually, through carefully extracting many patches of grass – and with the proper blending techniques – you are sure to end up with a realistic grassy look for your outdoor scenes with which you can go on to add your own personal illustrative style.



GRASS EXTRACTION: *An example extraction of a patch of grass in Photoshop*

Changing eye colour

Exactly how hard is it to change someone's eye colour in Photoshop? I'm not talking about removing red eye from photographs here, but rather their actual eye colour.
– Anthony Diflippo

Advanced Photoshop: As with most things in Photoshop, there are several methods to approach the task of altering a person's eye colour digitally. Each method has its own benefits and drawbacks and depends heavily on the image being used. After exploring several techniques, the best advice we have is to make certain you use an adjustment layer so the changes are much easier to alter later on. The steps below will illustrate exactly how to accomplish this.

1 Select the eyes

Begin by creating a selection around the eyes. Use the Elliptical Marquee tool to outline the iris. Then set the selection mode to Intersect and draw out a larger ellipse around the white of the eye. This should deselect the eyelid area.

2 Add adjustment layer

Add an adjustment layer (Hue/Saturation works just fine, but Color Balance gave better results here) and Photoshop will use the selection as a mask for the adjustment layer. If the selection doesn't look accurate, simply tweak the mask on the adjustment layer.

Tricky trees

When it comes to painting trees, I struggle. Could you give me some tips on how I can create better-looking foliage?
– Sam Travis

Advanced Photoshop: We'll need two brushes: one that will paint leaves en masse and one to scatter individual leaves to add believability.

1 Prep your brush

Grab a photo of a tree branch with some clearly defined leaves. We need to clean it up with the Eraser tool to make sure the edges are all finished nicely. Desaturate the image and use your preferred adjustment tool to achieve a medium-dark grey tone. Save your brush via Edit>Define Brush Preset.

2 The fun part

Your new brush will be at the end of your Brushes list. Select it and in the Brushes tab set the Angle Jitter and Roundness Jitter values high – this will ensure the leaves paint randomly. Build up layers from dark to light to create volume and depth, using Pen Pressure to control Opacity and Flow.

3 Finish with detail

Take one leaf from your first brush to create a new one that will be used to add detail. It's important for this brush to have a nice scattering effect so play with the Scattering value in the Brush settings. Save each brush when you change the settings, making as many variations as you like!

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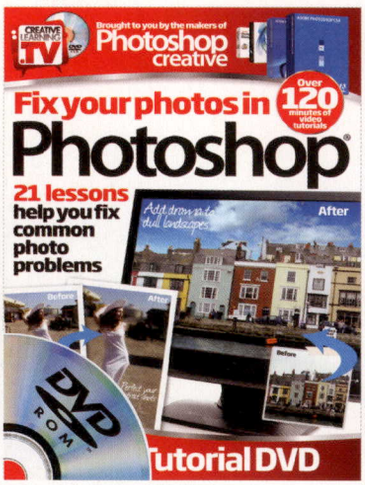

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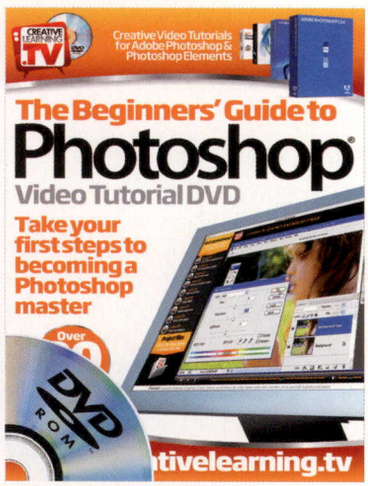

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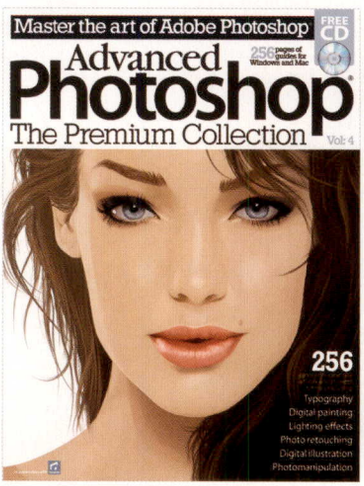

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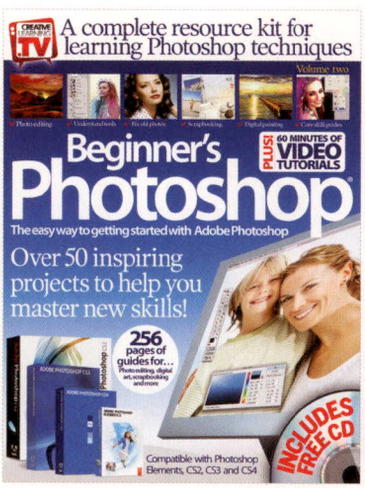

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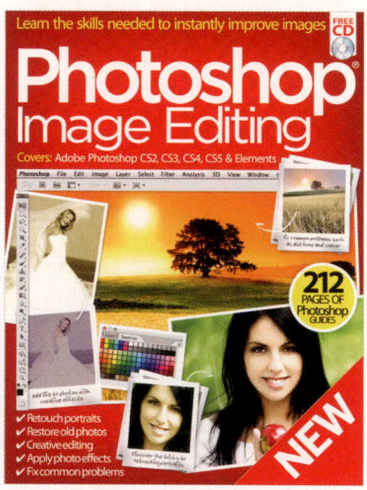

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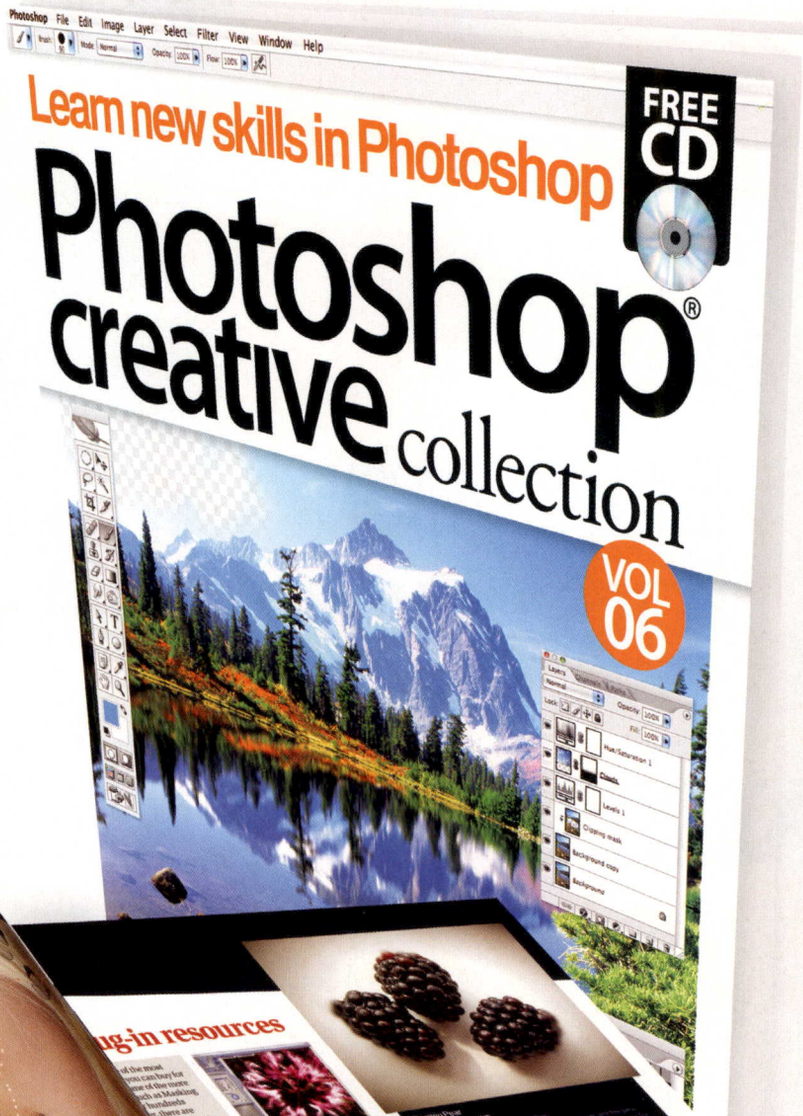

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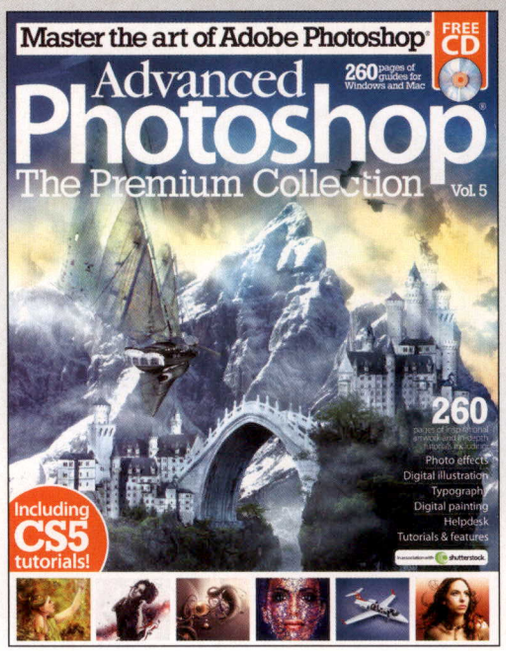

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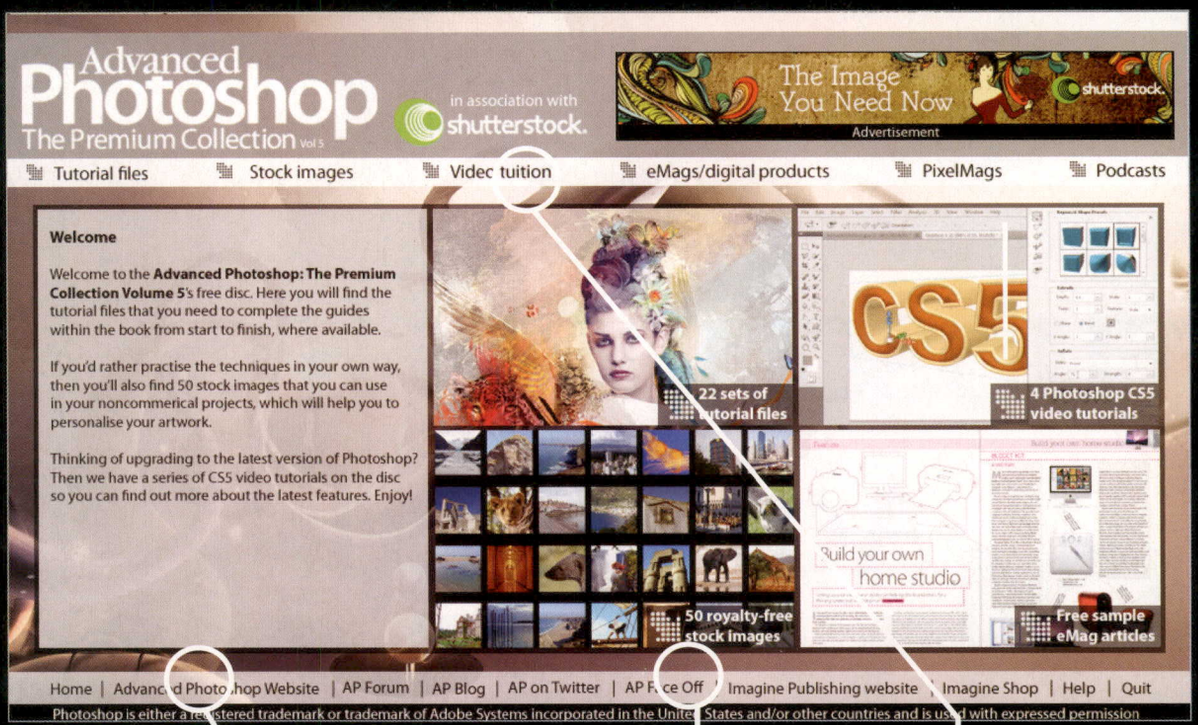

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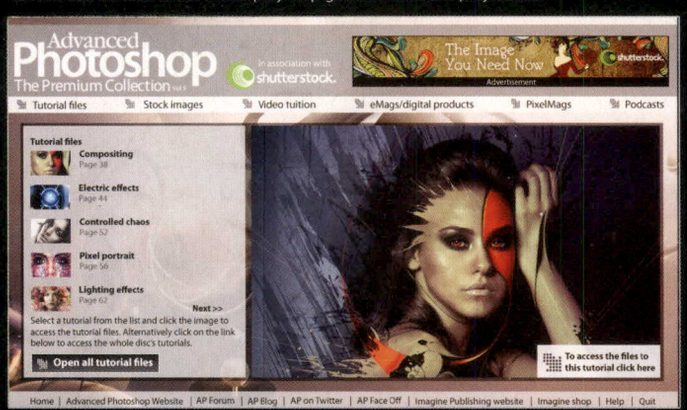

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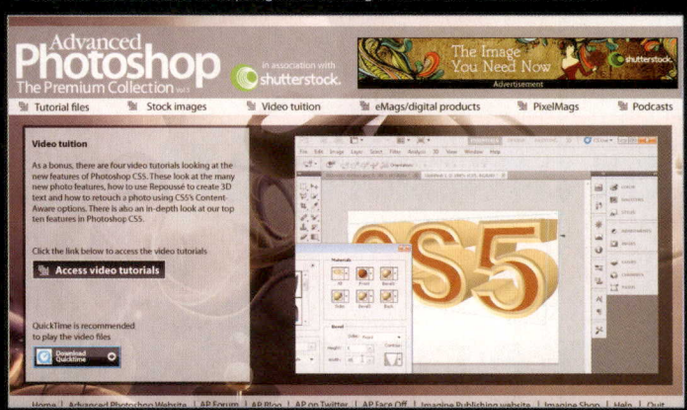

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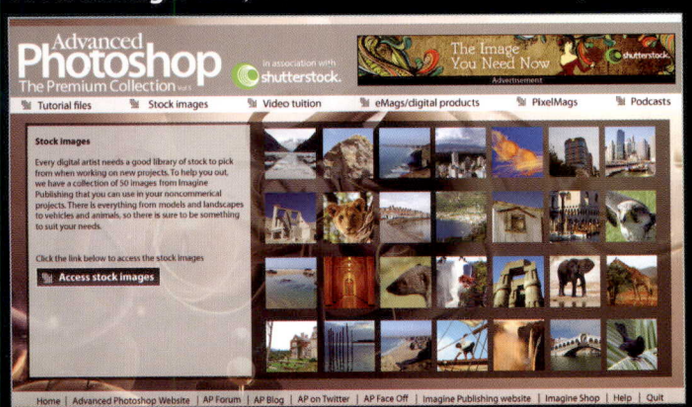

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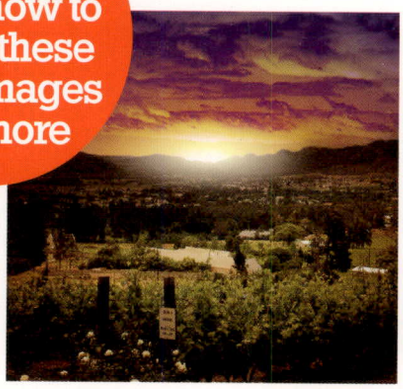
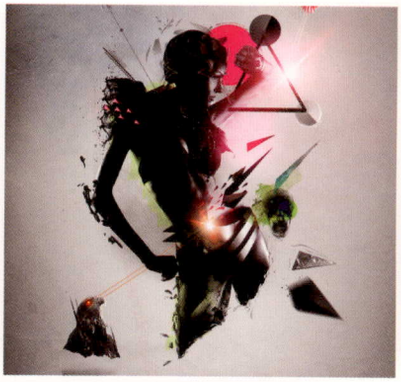

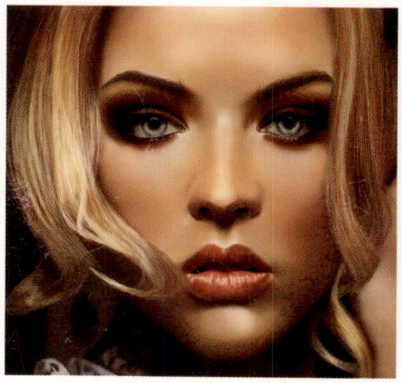

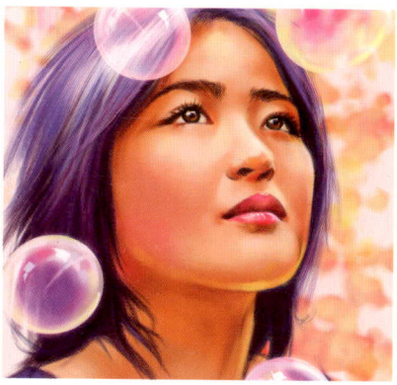

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